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**Contents**

Editorial ................................................................. 3

Religion of Islam and Family Planning .......................... 6

by Dr. Zohurul Hoque

The Impact of the Sirah — Life-career of the Prophet Muhammad — on Muslim Reformers and Fashioners of Islamic History .................................................. 12

by Dr. Husayn Mu'nis

“The Medicine of the Soul” among Arab Peoples ............... 14

by Dr. Salim ‘Ammár

An Examination of the Claim that Cyprus is Greek .......... 20

The Romance Story of Layla and Majnu’ ....... 22

by Husayn Rofé

A Look at the Past — some Seventy Years Ago ............ 25

Children’s Page ..................................................... 37

by Olive Toto

The Order of the “Whirling Dervishes” ................... 39

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An American on Ten Myths about the Middle East

When a North American comes to live in the Middle East, he suffers from what is called, "a cultural shock". Furthermore, when he returns to the United States or Canada, he may have a relapse! Abroad, he is shattered by the discovery of his own ignorance; back home he is dismayed by the misconceptions of his friends.

"I hate to admit how ignorant I was." Canadian broadcaster, James Reed, told me recently after a few days in the Middle East while working on a television film. "Before I arrived, I thought that the Arabs were poor and backward, that they were all Muslims, and that the Commandos were a bunch of wild-eyed terrorists. Those myths have been exploded fast."

Those are but three of a dozen or more myths about the Israeli-Arab world generally accepted as facts of life in the United States and Canada. They are much less likely to be believed in a better informed Europe.

Of course, the Middle East has a few myths about North America too, that Canada is terribly cold and covered with snow, that the Canadian government is subservient to London and/or Washington, and that the Zionists control the mass media in the United States—and business and finance too. And they really believe that if only the United States president would tell Israel a thing or two, there could be peace and justice in the Holy Land.

Obviously there is some truth—twisted, distorted though it may be—behind all these beliefs. We have, I sincerely believe, a responsibility and an opportunity in the press to strip away the propaganda, to understand and interpret the myths, and to let the truth come through. The present tension in the Middle East threatens world peace. Present conditions keep two million homeless Arabs in poverty and bitterness, and there is danger that the deepening bitterness among Muslims and Christians on the one side and Jewish Zionists on the other, may do irreparable harm to relations among the people who believe in one God and have spiritual roots in one land.

Ten “myths” about the Middle East, commonly believed, are discussed in the following paragraphs in order to correct distortions and false information.
1. Israel is a poor little nation surrounded by hostile Arabs

For many, this myth was exploded by the revelations that followed the June 1967 war. Some gentiles, accustomed to believing that the Jew was not a very good soldier, discovered that when fighting for Israel, the Israeli Jews are superb soldiers in a mighty military machine.

"There are fewer than three million Jews in Israel. They are surrounded by sixty to one hundred million Arabs depending on how you study the map. And the Arabs are increasingly hostile," the myth continues. But if one remembers "little Japan," or that tight "little island" called Britain in the nineteenth century, or centuries of Middle Eastern history, one realizes that it is not the size of the country, but the size of the army, and not the number of soldiers but the quality of equipment and training that count. And Israel is backed up by an enormously efficient international organization.

Even as far back as 1948, as British General and Middle East expert, Glubb Pasha, points out, Israel had 65,000 troops ready for combat; the Arabs had 21,500. Right now, few have any doubt that Israel could take Amman, Damascus and Beirut tomorrow, or at least within the week, as far as military might is concerned.

2. The Arabs are poor and backward

"Disease, ignorance, filth, and poverty are the daily lot of the great majority in the cities of the Arab world, while in the countryside, hopeless peasants try to scratch a living from soil wasted and depleted by centuries of neglect." That is what a Canadian publisher—who years of faithful allegiance to Zionism and two trips to Israel—put his name over in the introduction of a special Israeli supplement of a Canadian magazine.

There is just enough truth in it, just enough evidence for it to persuade the superficial observer that it is completely true. One could say somewhat the same thing about North America after viewing a Communist propaganda film about Georgia or a well chosen American slum.

My teenaged daughter, after visiting both the countryside and the major cities of Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, read the above comment and said, "Just imagine my friends in Canada reading garbage like that." And the well travelled American Methodist pastor of Beirut's Community Church read it, lowered his head, and said reverently, "My God, what nonsense! But I don't think any American paper would be as bad as that."

I could write about the great cities, the splendid universities, the culture, the science, the people, my Arab friends and their children who speak four languages and the several countries where there is free education from nursery school to Ph.D. Let me just say that if you believe the above propaganda, you will be startled after a trip to the Middle East. And you will be angered by the way you were misled by so much in the North American press.

3. The Arabs are all Muslims

Now most Arabs are! But approximately half of Lebanon is Christian. In addition, there are six million Coptic Orthodox Christians in the United Arab Republic. About one-tenth of Palestine was Christian. Syria is about one-fifth Christian.

These ancient Arab churches are rich in tradition. Although comparisons are odious, it could be argued that the mark of his church is more deeply engraved on the life of an Arab Christian than on the Christian of the West.

While there are tensions between Christians and Muslims, there is remarkable understanding too. And if anyone thinks that the growing bitterness of the Middle East is only between Muslim and Jew, he is very wrong. Christians who live in the Arab countries and in occupied territory, share the deep sense of injustice the Arab Muslim feels over being dispossessed from his Palestinian home. In fact, a large number of these dispossessed Arabs are Christians themselves!

4. The Commandos are terrorists

Al-Fatah, the Fida'iyyin, and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) guerillas have committed some acts of terrorism. They have learned from Algeria, from Vietnam, and from the Stern Gang, and other Jewish terrorist organizations that planted bombs and wiped out whole Arab villages during the years they were trying to drive the British and the Arabs out of Palestine.

But the vast majority of the Arab people consider them freedom fighters and resistance forces struggling to regain their homes. When Canadian Mennonite, Dr. Frank Epps, made a quick tour through the Middle East, he made the following observation about the PLO: "It is important to note that the Christian leaders generally support the PLO, and view it as a necessary movement in the interests of the Arab cause. I found only one church leader who, in this regard, was pacifistic, and his opinions were more than cancelled out by his most militant wife."

In occupied Jordan, a Christian worker told me, "The heart of the people — of at least ninety per cent of the people — is with the Commandos." And in Amman, the Greek Orthodox bishop said, "For two thousand years we have built statues to such people . . . we should memorialize our men who fight and die for their country." In Syria some churchmen pray for the guerrillas. And foreign churchmen say, "We can't support violence, but the commando cause is just."

5. The Israelis want peace and Arabs want war

I have spent enough time in Israel and in Arab countries to believe that the common people of all countries want peace. "A peaceful settlement on the basis of the 22 November 1967 resolution of the Security Council is the prayer of every man," Bishop Samuel of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Cairo told me.

Officially the Arab governments most concerned have accepted the 22 November resolution, and declare their willingness to implement it. But the first condition as laid down by the United Nations is for Israel to withdraw from the territories she occupied during the June war. And Israel has been digging in steadily and settling down fast. She annexed East Jerusalem contrary to United Nations instructions. She refused to let the new crop of refugees return to their camps on the West bank against the unanimous (except for Israel) vote of the U.N.

Israel says loudly that she wants a peace settlement. But in her actions she makes every Arab think she is aggressive and expansionist. Israel insists on dealing directly with individual Arab states. The Arabs want to negotiate through the United Nations. But no state represents the conquered Palestinians, and they are the big losers in this situation. They
themselves insist that Cairo, Amman, and Beirut cannot represent them.

Then there is the Zionist record. When Lord Balfour made his famous declaration over fifty years ago, Palestine was made up of eighty-eight per cent Arabs, eleven per cent Jews, and a few others. At that time the Jews owned two per cent of the land. By 1948, they owned seven per cent and comprised nearly one-third of the population, increased through illegal immigration during the British mandate years.

The U.N. partition plan gave the Jewish-Zionists fifty-four per cent of the land. During the 1948 war, they increased this substantially and now they have it all, plus big hunks of Jordanian, Syrian, and U.A.R. territory.

The one-time Arab majority lost their lands. Some now live within Israel as second class citizens, while Jews immigrate from any part of the world to have first-class citizenship when, or even before they arrive in Israel. Other Arabs, residing in occupied territory as conquered people, live in fear of being arrested by Israeli authorities, or of seeing their homes and property destroyed. Still others are virtually homeless and exist in the tented camps of Jordan or beyond.

The Arabs say that this is unjust. They want peace, but they want these wrongs corrected. Israel wants peace, but apparently on a conqueror’s terms. Most Arabs believe—rightly or wrongly—that Israel wishes to expand further. The Lebanon is particularly fearful of losing the southern part of her land.

6. The refugees could have stayed, but they ran away on the advice of Arab governments

This falsehood is still repeated and widely believed. It has been denied so often by so many authoritative persons. Let me quote one of the most recent statements—one made by the distinguished John Davis, who probably knows more about Arab refugees than any American alive. He was Commissioner-General of U.N.R.W.A., and has recently written The Elusive Peace. He says, “The extent to which the refugees were savagely driven out by the Israelis as a deliberate master-plan has been insufficiently recognized.”

In a long chapter, he exposes the many other anti-refugee myths—Arabs are lazy; Arabs could have settled the refugees in their own countries, but keep them in camps for propaganda purposes—all the familiar clichés of Zionist propaganda believed by most North American Jews and many Christians.

7. The Israelis have made the desert bloom; the Arabs have neglected their land

Far be it for me to take anything away from those industrious and decent Israeli settlers who drained the swamps, irrigated the desert and planted the trees. We all know and appreciate what the Israeli people have done with funds from Germany, the United States, and Jewish synagogues all over the world. They work hard. They are efficient.

And Arab lands are undeveloped. But when I first visited Egypt’s Liberation Province (ever heard of the Liberation Province?) in the Nile Delta, I discovered that the United Arab Republic in that one development had reclaimed almost the precise acreage without publicity, that Israel has reclaimed in Palestine. I cannot take space to detail these things, but there is an untold story of vast projects on reclamation, irrigation, and development from the Russian financed Aswan Dam to church-sponsored agricultural and reafforestation developments in the valleys of upper Jordan.

And many of those orchards pointed out by Israeli guides to wide-eyed Holy Land tourists are more than twenty years old. They were planted by Arabs during the British mandate. They belong to Arabs, but they were confiscated by the Israelis after the Arabs were driven out into refugee camps in 1948.

Israelis are justly proud of their achievements in the lovely city of Haifa. Nevertheless, Haifa was a fine city before Israel was born.

We should not ignore the backwardness—by western standards—of much of the Arab world. But we should not forget either that the Arabs, rather than being allowed to progress, have instead been conquered, ruled, and exploited by others for centuries.

8. Israel is a bastion of western democracy in an undemocratic world

My Canadian publisher friend also put his name to this. “Israel is the one country in the Middle East that is governed by and dedicated to, the system of a parliamantary, democratic government founded on the principles of justice and freedom as we know them in the western world . . . that is why Arab leaders continue to hate Israel, and continue to preach war and obliteration of Jews . . .”

This statement is so clever and so false. There is much to admire about democracy in Israel, such as vigorous criticism of Israeli policies in the Knesset, private discussion, and the press. Western Zionists, who label any critic of Israel as anti-Semitic, could learn much from this criticism.

But to the Arab, and to every objective foreigner I know who has worked and travelled in both Israel and the Arab countries, Israel is a western imperialist, expansionist, military power. How can there be true democracy and freedom in a country which says, “We want to be Jewish”—and treats its non-Jewish minority as inferiors.

The most penetrating comments on this are being made by Jewish prophets within and outside Israel. The writer and intellectual, I. F. Stone, in the New York Review of Books, quotes former Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, and General Moshe Dayan. Mr. Ben Gurion said, “Israel is the country of the Jews and only of the Jews. Every Arab who lives here has the same right as any minority citizen in any country of the world, but he must admit the fact that he lives in a Jewish country.” Stone adds, “The implication must chill Jews in the outside world.”

When General Dayan was asked if Israel could absorb the Arab refugees, he said that economically they could, but, “. . . we want to have a Jewish state. We can absorb them, but it won’t be the same country.”

Stone continues, “Israel is creating a kind of moral schizophrenia in world Jewry. In the outside world the welfare of Jewry depends on the maintenance of secular, non-racial, pluralistic societies. In Israel, Jewry finds itself defending a society in which mixed marriages cannot be legalized, in which non-Jewish children have less status than Jews, and in which

Continued on page 40
Religion undoubtedly plays a very vital rôle to regulate the life of the people. The religious belief in respect of Family Planning is a very strong factor in the implementation of the Family Planning Programme in any community. This programme could not make much headway amongst the Roman Catholic community because of the religious barrier, even though the Pope recently gave his verdict favouring a small family norm.6 The socio-cultural background of the Muslims is in favour of large families.4 There is a prevalent conception among the Muslims that the religion of Islam encourages large families, and that imposition of any restriction in procreation of children is therefore irreligious. The Muslims therefore procreate at a rate generally higher than other communities, without paying due regard to one’s economic stability or available resources.15 16 Men-in-authority amongst the Muslims are increasingly showing their support towards the Family Planning programme. The Grand Muftis of Jordan22, and of Egypt,24 the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey,4 the Imám of the famous Jumu’ah Masjid of Delhi,8 and many other religious leaders among the Muslims25 have issued Fatwas or Religious Rulings in support of Family Planning, by interpreting the viewpoint of Islam from the Holy Qur’án and from the Sunnah, or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

The religion of Islam is based primarily on the Holy Qur’án, secondly on the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, and next on the opinion of the learned among the Muslims (The Qur’án 4:59).14 In the light of this let us examine what Islam says regarding Family Planning.

MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD

Marriage and parenthood are the basic codes of family life. Marriage in Islam is a sacred contract, which under ordinary circumstances every Muslim must enter into.

The Holy Qur’án says:

And give in marriage the spouseless from among you, and those who are good among your male slaves and your female slaves. If they be poor, God, out of His grace, will give them means; for God is Ample-giving, Knowing. (24:32).19

The Prophet Muhammad said:

“He who is able to marry should marry. For it keeps the gaze low and guards chastity; and he who cannot should take to fasting (occasionally), for it will have a castrating effect on him (by increasing the power of his self-control)” (The Sahih of al-Bukhari, 30:10).9 10

And also:

“When the servant of God marries, he perfects half his religion; he needs only fear God in the other half.” (The Mishkát, 13:1).3

Thus the religion of Islam is against celibacy, and considers marriage and shouldering the consequent responsibilities thereof to be the duty of every human being.9

Though parenthood is considered the primary object of marriage, there are other important purposes of married life: for multiplication of human race could occur even without the institution of marriage. Marriage and family life bring stability and security in society, preserve morality and virtue, and help bring peace, love, compassion and unity among different members of the family.

The Holy Qur’án says:

He it is Who creates you from a single soul (the male and female both being created from the same essence, 16:72), and makes therefrom its mates that he (or she, i.e. man in general) may find comfort in her (or to her spouse). (7:189).18

And again:

And those who say (as a prayer): “Our Lord! grant us out of our wives and our offspring the joy of (our) eyes...” (25:74).19

And also:

And of His signs is that He creates for you mates out of your selves (i.e. your own humankind), in order that you may find quiet of mind in them. And He has put love and mercy between you. (30:21).13

Though marriage is an obligatory institution in Islam, and the Prophet said:

“Marry the affectionate prolific woman, for I shall be proud of you among the nations,”22 yet there is a precondition to marriage.

The Holy Qur’án says:

And (before you marry, be sure of a house wherein to tarry, so) let those who cannot find a match (with their
scanty resource) restrain themselves until God gives them (the financial and other) means out of His grace. (25:33)."

The Prophet said:

"O assembly of young people! whoever of you has the means to support a wife, he should get married, for this is the best means to keep the looks cast down and guard the chastity; and he who has not the means, let him keep fast, for this will act as prophylactic (by increasing the power of self-control). (Bukhári, 67:2)."

Thus upon the obligatory institution of marriage in Islam, there is an excuse for those who have not got sufficient financial and other means to enter into the responsibilities for maintaining the family, and upbringing the children. This indicates that Islam recommends, on economic grounds, to limit the size of the family, and this economic hardship is one of the main reasons for advocating Family Planning.

**CARE OF THE CHILDREN ENJOINED**

The purpose of marriage, as has been examined, is not simply procreation. It is the duty of all parents to look after the family, and to provide their children with adequate food, clothing, shelter and education.

The mother is enjoined in the Holy Qur’án to suckle the child for two complete years:

*And the (suckling) mothers should suckle their children for two full years.* (2:233).

It is therefore essential, that conditions that might interfere with it should be avoided.

The Holy Qur’án says:

*And We have enjoined on man (good behaviour, 17:23, 24) concerning his parents—(because) his mother carries him (in her womb) with weariness upon weariness, and his weaning (completes) in (another) two years (during when both the mother and the father undergo immense physical, mental and financial strain on account of him, 2:233)—saying: “Give thanks to Me and to your parents (as We made provision for you to be brought up with necessary love, care and attention). Towards Me is the return (of all to answer for your doings)...”* (31:14).

And again:

*And We have enjoined on man the doing of good towards his parents (17:23, 24). His mother bears him (in her womb) with pain, and with pain does she give birth to him. And his bearing (in her womb) and his weaning takes thirty months (within which period further child-bearing will deprive the mother from recouping her health and the child from its proper weaning, 31:14; therefore better give space between child-births, because in space comes grace).* (46:15).

In the question of bringing up the child in its childhood, the parents are instructed not to strain themselves unduly (The Qur’án, 2:233). Men have also been warned in verses 8:28 and 64:15, against mishandling the children. Great emphasis has been put on the question of education: The Prophet has advised the Muslims to go even to distant countries like China in quest of knowledge. The very first verse of the Holy Qur’án revealed to Muhammad contains the command to read (The Qur’án, 96:1):

It is, therefore, essential that the children, when they are born, should be adequately nursed and suckled, properly brought up with necessary love, care and attention, sufficiently educated in temporal and spiritual fields, and avenues be opened up to them for a bright future. They should not grow to such an extent as to live a life of ignominy and humiliation. Family Planning aims at family regulation, not family limitation. A child should come by choice, not by chance. This can be made possible by the constructive use of the methods of conception-control.

**FAMILY PLANNING DOES NOT MEAN INFANTICIDE**

The question of infanticide can arise if there is killing of a human child. The methods recommended are all meant to prevent union of the male seed or the sperm with the female seed or the ovum, thereby not allowing pregnancy to take place. In absence of pregnancy, the question of killing of the human child does not arise. No one can be held responsible for murder of a person who never existed in life. If it is argued that the methods destroy the sperms which produce human lives (and the sperms are not human beings) killing of a sperm cannot therefore amount to homicide. For the purpose of fertilization, only one sperm out of some 400 million in an ejaculation is needed to enter into the ovum, and the rest are wasted, though every one of these sperms, under favourable conditions, could have given rise to a so-called "prospective human life". Further, the conjugal relations occurring on other days are all unproductive, causing wastage millions of sperms. Delay in marriage also prevents a substantial number of child-births. Quite a bumper crop of children might have been produced if people had availed all the chances. Does any one consider himself criminally responsible for his failure in producing all the prospective human lives? In whatever way one may have argued, the finding comes to this that the sperms are not human beings, and the methods of contraception do not in any way lead to killing of human life.

The Holy Qur’án is very explicit on this point of killing of a human being:

*Say (O Muhammad!): “Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you—that you do not associate with Him aught. And (He orders you) the doing of good to (your) parents, and that (as your converse duties to your children) you do not kill your children (either physically or intellectually by depriving their education, because a man without knowledge is like one who is dead, hence better bunborn than untaught) for (fear of) poverty (thinking that you cannot provide them with food, clothing, shelter and education):”—We make provision for you and for them too (and so there is no ground at all for your killing the children after they have been animated or given birth to).* (6:125).

And again:

*And do not kill your children (physically or intellectually by depriving them of their education, or by causing abortion after they have been animated) for fear of poverty (for fear that you will not be able to provide for them). (In fact We burden no soul except to its capacity, 6:153, hence) We make provision for them and for you too (and you are to acquire it by your own efforts, 53:39). Verify the killing of them (after they have been animated or given birth to) is a severe crime (6:152, 17:31)."*
The Arabs used to kill their children for three reasons: (i) Economic hardship, and that is why God said:

*Do not kill your children for fear of poverty;*

(ii) Self-imposed shame, pertaining to birth of daughters (The Qur'an, 16:58, 59);

And (iii) Appeasing the gods (The Qur'an, 6:138): All of these pertained to the child who was born alive. But the way the hungry and destitute people of the present age are producing supportless children, and putting them right in the throes of death throughout their lifetime, is much more criminal than killing them once and for all as practised by the uncivilized nations of yore. The Holy Qur'an says the same thing:

*Persecution is more serious than slaughter.* (2:191, 217).


In the opinion of the Caliph 'Ali, the Caliph 'Umar and others, infanticide or "killing of children" as depicted in verses 6:152 and 17:31, is out of the question till the seven stages of growth of a child are completed.15 The Holy Qur'an records in verses 23:12-14, these seven stages of the growth of a foetus most scientifically as (i) an extract of nutrients drawn from the soil, (ii) a sperm inside the womb, (iii) an embryonic clot, (iv) a lump of flesh, (v) making of bones, (vi) dressing the bones with tissues, and finally (vii) infusion of soul and creation into another being.

The jurists infer from it, that it is permissible to take recourse to abortion so long as the embryo is still unfomed in the human shape. They think that within 120 days of pregnancy, the embryo or the foetus is not yet a human being. The Hanafi and the Maliki Orthodox Ways, and other jurists have allowed abortion before the infursion of Rih, or Divine Spirit into the foetus, i.e. before it is animated. The Caliph 'Umar, the Second Caliph, does not regard abortion within 120 days as infanticide.22 Therefore, wasting of sperm before conception has nothing to do with killing of human being.

**CHILDREN SHOULD COME AS GIFTS OF GOD**

Children are considered gifts of God. Since they are precious gifts, it is our duty to take proper care of these gifts, so that they grow up well looked after, well educated, and become worthy sons of the soil, rather than they grow up ill-fed, ill-clad, uneducated, and left to be destitutes, delinquents, anti-socials, and even criminals.

Water is a very precious gift of God, without which our life cannot exist. We realise its worth only when the well is dry, and when men and animals start dying in thousands. But if God sends too much water causing devastating floods, it also destroys our property, crops and life. If God would withdraw air for a while, it will cause suffocation and death. On the other hand, wind, storm and cyclone also cause destruction and death. During too hot a climate people die of heat-stroke, but when too cold, they are frozen to death. Water, air, sunlight and everything that we receive from God are indeed blessings to us, so long as they are according to our optimum requirement. If they are withdrawn or given in excess, they invite misery, suffering and even destruction. And this state of excess or withdrawal of a blessing, i.e. the state of extremes, is described in the Holy Qur'an as "Hell", and the optimum as Heaven.

*They (the inmates of hell) shall not taste therein coolness nor (any refreshing) drink; but (they shall have) boiling liquid and intensely cold drink—a reward corresponding to their sins of following two extremes in their life-time.* (78:24, 25).20

Similarly, children are, of course, very precious gifts and blessings of God, so long as they are born to our choice, and within our management. It is the quality that matters, not the quantity. Unwanted and unrestricted multiplication of population would invite misery and destruction to human species, and would act as a veritable hell rather than a blessing.12

The Holy Qur'an teaches us to pray for a pleasant atmosphere in the family with our wives and children:

*Our Lord! (whilst through mishandling, a good cow may have an ill calf) grant us out of our wives and our offspring the joy of (our) eyes (to witness in them a glorious life).* (25:74).23

This is because a family instead of bringing joy and happiness, and acting as a blessing, may bring in misery and distress, and act as a curse if they grow in excess to one’s resources, and become unmanageable. The Holy Qur'an asserts the same in verses 23:55, 56 as:

*Do they reckon that because of what We go on giving them of (worldly) wealth and children, We are hardening to them of good things? Nay, (these are but trials) they do not realise (that in absence of virtue these things cannot bring them happiness, 64:14, 15).20* 

Wealth and children put man into anxieties, tests and temptations, as stated in the following verses:

*And you know that your wealth and your children are a temptation (and a trial, because they may lead you to your downfall in case you mishandle them, or your love to them makes you blind to visualise the right from the wrong path, 64:14, 15). (8:28).20*

*Your wealth and your children are indeed a test (because they may lead you to your downfall in case you look after them improperly, or utilise them wrongly, or your love to them blindfolds you from the way of God), 64:15).20*

It is therefore essential on the part of the parents to have children wisely up to their optimum needs only.

**FAMILY PLANNING DOES NOT GO AGAINST THE WILL OF GOD**

The idea of destiny or fatalism is still prevailing in many communities, particularly amongst the Muslims. It is said that what is allotted cannot be blotted, and so if children are destined to come they will come in spite of our efforts to stop them from coming. Besides, the use of contraceptives will stand against the will of God and hence may draw His wrath.

I ask those who believe in such a doctrine regarding childbirth, whether they believe in it when it concerns their other things in daily life. Can they grow crops without doing cultivation, or eat food without preparing it? God gave us mouths to eat, but we must work to eat. If our country is invaded by an enemy, we cannot stay home believing in destiny to take its course. If our house is on fire, we cannot stand by doing nothing, believing in fate. If our children are in distress and danger, we cannot simply look on without trying to save them. If we fall sick, we cannot depend on fate without seeking treatment. Man is the highest creation of God. He is
called the Khalifah or "Vicegerent" of God on earth (The Qur'án, 2:30). He has been given hands to work, feet to stand, eyes to see, ears to hear, and brain to understand. Man has been endowed with intelligence, and he is to a certain extent master of his destiny. The Holy Qur'án says:

Man can have nothing but what he strives for. (53:39).

He therefore cannot remain inactive believing in fate to come by itself. He cannot remain static if he wants to prosper and advance.12 There is no sweet without sweat, no gains without pains, and no great object is attained without facing difficulties; for

We have certainly created man to face difficulties. (90:4).

Even there is nothing to go to heaven in a sedan.

O ye man! verily thou hast to labour towards thy Lord laboriously, then thou shalt meet Him. (84:6).

The inactivity on the part of mankind will lead to wastage of the gifts he has been endowed with, and blind faith in destiny without actions will in fact invite the wrath of God.


Verily the worst of terrestrials in the sight of God are the deaf (and) the dumb who do not (care to) understand (the arguments). (8:22).

A correct and judicious use of intellect and power for the progress of mankind is therefore most desirable, and is in conformity with the will of God. If man wants to have children, he cannot expect them to drop for him from heaven; he has to fulfill certain conditions or laws of nature. Similarly, he has to act in a certain way, and follow certain rules if he wants to avoid having children.12

FAMILY PLANNING IS NOT UN-ISLAMIC

Doubts dominate in the minds of many the question if or not the Holy Qur'án and the Sunnah permit the practice of Family Planning. We have already seen that Islam conforms to the philosophy of Family Planning. We shall now examine further the viewpoint of Islam on this burning problem of the day.

The Holy Qur'án was revealed 1,400 years ago, and at that time there was no population explosion problem, and no Family Planning programme in existence anywhere in the world. As a result, there is no mention of such matters in the Holy Qur'án in clear cut words. But the Holy Qur'án declares in the verse 25:33, that in it one can find the answer to any strange question and solution of any problem that might appear in the world at any age, only then one has to look deeply into it to analyse the message for extracting the answer (The Qur'án, 38:29).13 The Holy Qur'án intentionally avoids details of the rules of conduct in many matters of general nature, for the purpose stated in verse 3:101.

O you who believe! Do not ask (like the Jews, 2:67-71) about (the details of this or that practice on many) matters (which are not elaborately mentioned and) which if disclosed to you (will become obligatory and) may be unpleasant to you (whereas Islam gives ample scope to individuals to exercise judgment in solving problems, and framing laws according to the circumstances of the time and place). And if you ask about them during (the period of) the descent of the Qur'án, they would be disclosed to you (and then Islam would become a paralysed religion of strict rites and rituals, losing the dynamic force for the material and intellectual developments of its followers).19

The population problem is no doubt a very serious and world wide problem of the day. The Holy Qur'án declares in verse 5:3:

This day I have perfected for you your religion, and completed My blessing upon you, and have accepted for you Islam as a religion.

Therefore, through analogy, the Holy Qur'án must contain guidance on the population problem also. Though it does not categorically say that one should space one's children to so many years, or one should get oneself sterilized after getting so many children, yet it has been observed from the foregoing discussions that the Holy Qur'án, and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, support the philosophy of Family Planning. Islam sets great value on individual liberty. The details are left to individuals to work out according to their own circumstances and needs.

THE QUR'ÁN ON CONTRACEPTION

Let us examine if use of contraceptives is permissible in Islam. The Holy Qur'án has given liberty to a husband to come to his wife at any time, and in any manner he pleases. The Holy Qur'án says:

But when they have cleansed themselves (after menstruation) you may come to them in any manner (of your choice) as God has ordained you (to reap the best fruit of your conjugal life, 30:21). (2:222)20

Again:

Your wives are a farm for you (to cultivate, because it is the women who bring up the children, and on their careful handling depends the growth of a pious and stabilised society; so come to your farm as-and-when (i.e. in any manner and at any time, 2:222) you please (because it is the farmer's care that makes the fields bear), and send beforehand (some good deeds as by uttering Bismillah, that may bring profit) for your souls (for reaping the best harvest of conjugal life in the form of peace, love, compassion and good offspring, 25:74, 30:21). (2:223).20

There is, therefore, no objection in the Holy Qur'án to the use of contraceptives, or any other devices while meeting with the wife.14 15

HADITH ON CONTRACEPTION

There are most reliable traditions which allow 'Azl or Coitus Interruptus, i.e. the Withdrawal Method as a means of contraception. A Companion of the Prophet, Abu Sa'id, is reported to have said that the Prophet allowed doing 'Azl with women taken into captivity during a war.17 22 Another report has it that a man said to the Prophet:

"I have a young wife. I hate that she should be pregnant, and I want what men want; but the Jews claim that coitus interruptus is minor infanticide."

The Prophet replied:

"The Jews lie. If God wishes to create the child, you will not be able to divert Him from that."22

Here the reason for practising 'Azl is reported to be just
the wish of the husband. Another report from Abū Saʿīd relates:

“A man said, ‘O Messenger of God! I own a slave girl and practise `Aẓl with her, and I do not want her to be with child, but I desire what men desire, and the Jews say that `Aẓl is minor infanticide.’”

The Prophet replied:

“The Jews are wrong. If God wills to create a child, you cannot prevent.”17

The reason of economic hardship is also related through Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, in which a person practised coitus interruptus as he feared that children might be born. The Prophet allowed it, and added that if it were harmful it would have been harmful for Persia and Rome as well. The permission of `Aẓl is further confirmed by Bukhari in his Sahih from a Companion of the Prophet, who says: “We used to practise `Aẓl during the time of the Prophet while the Qur’ān was being revealed.” That means, if it deserved prohibition, the Qur’ān could have prohibited it.72 There are many Hadith from the Sahih of Muslim, the Masnad of Ahmad and Sunan of Ibn Mājah, in which `Aẓl has been permitted.17 Permission for the practice of `Aẓl has been recorded in the four Orthodox Ways.22 The opinion is that `Aẓl with a free-wife is to be practised with her consent, whilst with a slave-wife no consent is necessary.17

There is, of course, a saying of the Prophet:

“A man, who abstains from marriage because he is terrified of a family, cannot belong to us.”

It does not mean that such a man does not remain a member of the Ummah of Muhammad; it simply means that he does not conform to the practice of the Prophet, and the Prophet’s practice is to perform the most excellent.17 When according to Islam, a man is to consider his economic capabilities to justify his entering into the marriage contract, there cannot be something un-Islamic in adjusting child-births to one’s means of maintenance.8 It may be added that Family Planning does not discourage marriage, it only wants to regulate the size of the family. In another tradition the Prophet says:

“Marry the affectionate prolific woman, for I shall be proud of you among the nations.”

This he made conditional upon the availability of means to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage as discussed earlier, with reference to the Holy Qur’ān and the Hadith. The Holy Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet, lay emphasis on the Muslims to be strong, healthy and prosperous in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.23 But what is their condition today? The present day Muslims, ill-fed, ill-clad, diseased in body and mind, devoid of education, backward in ideas and thoughts, ruminating over the past glory without looking forward, having the least desire and effort to improve their condition socially, culturally, economically and politically, though a large number in figures, but not in quality, have become a class of such degraded creatures, at the sight of whom, I am afraid, the Prophet will not at all feel proud of his Ummah (people).

A tradition reported by Abū Saʿīd relates that while allowing `Aẓl, the Prophet remarked:

“Every being whose creation is decreed till the Final Day will come into being.”17

It is just like saying that whosoever is decreed to die, shall die. Just as it cannot be concluded from this statement that the ailing should not be treated to prevent death, it would not be right to infer that contraceptives should not be used to prevent birth.7

MUSLIM AUTHORITIES ON CONTRACEPTION

Al-Ghazzālī (d. 1001 C.E.), the Muḥaddid and the Imām, allowed `Aẓl on the following motives: (i) in case of a slave-girl, to safeguard one’s propietorial right, as the slave-girl would become free, if she becomes mother of her master’s child; (ii) to preserve the wife’s beauty and vigour so that she may be a permanent source of joy, and to protect her life from the risk of child-birth; and (iii) to allay fear of numerous anxieties on account of numerous children, and the desire to avoid tiring duties to feed them, and the desire to refrain from vicious pursuits.27 The Imām Ibn at-Qayyim also holds a similar view on `Aẓl.

During the lifetime of the Prophet there was only one method of birth control called `Aẓl known to the people. Even in present days `Aẓl or Coitus Interruptus, i.e. the Withdrawal Method, is practised widely, though it is considered uncertain, unsafe, unesthetic, and likely to cause nervous tension. Now many more reliable, safe, scientific and aesthetic methods have been invented. This is just like the treatment of a disease for which now many reliable medicines are available, though during the time of the Prophet there were just a few unreliable remedies. If recourse to modern treatment including surgery to control diseases is not against the Sunnah, the use of modern contraceptives, including sterilization to control births is also not against the religion.7

FURTHER SUPPORT FROM THE QUR’ĀN

The Holy Qur’ān has not imposed on mankind any back-breaking hardship in matters relating to religion (The Qur’ān, 22:78). It has rather warned the parents not to burden themselves unduly on account of their children:

No soul shall impose (upon it) a duty but to (the extent of) its capacity (2:286); neither shall a mother be made to suffer injury (physically, mentally or financially) on account of her child, nor shall he to whom the child is born (be made to suffer) on account of his child (in bringing it up with necessary care, 64:15). (2:233).20

Children bring with them innumerable cares. The parents, particularly the mother, fail to perform five-times prayers regularly, to keep Fast during Ramadān, and to live a clean and normal life. The Believers are cautioned against this in the verse 63:9, in the following words:

O you who believe! (whereas morals are corrupted by the worship of riches, and children are certain cares but uncertain comforts,) let not your belongings and your children (keep you so much engrossed in the pursuits of life as to) divert you from the remembrance of God; and whosoever does this, then (mind you that) these are themselves the losers.20

The Believers are also warned to take precautionary measures against unmanageable families:

O you who believe! verify some of your wives and your children are (occasionally) enemies to you (because it is most often for the sake of one’s wife and children that one adopts a wrong course of action); so take precautions against them (and let them not grow beyond the scope of your control). (64:14).20

Restriction has been imposed in verse 4:3 upon the number of wives one can have at a time. Warning has been
given in the foregoing verse, for keeping the family within the bounds of control. Two years’ suckling of the baby by the mother as enjoined in the Holy Qur’an in verses 2:233, 31:14, 46:15 etc., necessitates spacing the child-births to more than thirty months. The Holy Qur’an is, therefore, quite explicit in its recommendations in favour of the small family norm.

SUPPORTING FATWAS AND STATEMENTS

The Grand Mufti of Jordan, in his Fatwa, discussed the pros and cons of Islam and finally stated: “We hereby give our judgement with confidence in favour of Family Planning.”23 The Mufti of Egypt, in his Fatwa came to the conclusion that “It is permissible for either husband or wife, by mutual consent, to take any measures to prevent semen entering uterus, in order to prevent conception.”24 The Fatwa Committee of al-Azhar University, Cairo, has issued Fatwa permitting use of contraceptives.25 So did the Imam of the famous Jumu’ah Masjid of Delhi.26 In fact, Fatwas in support of Family Planning have been issued by the religious heads in almost every country of the world.27

Of late, there has been a very outstanding publication, The Running Commentary of the Holy Qur’an by the ‘Allamah Dr. Khādim Rahmān Nūrī of Sūfī Hamsaya, Laitumkhrah Masjid Compound, Shillong, India, which gives critical explanatory comments, by putting them within parenthesis in the translation of the original Arabic text. In this Running Commentary of the Holy Qur’an, we come across comments that speak in support of Family Planning.28 29

A statement stressing the urgency of population planning was issued through the United Nations on 10 December, 1966 C.E., under signature of 19 world leaders, including the heads of six Muslim governments, viz. Shāh Muhammad Rezā Pahlavi of Iran, King Husayn of Jordan, Tunku ‘Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaysia, King Hasan II of Morocco, Habīb Bourguiba, President of Tunisia, and Gamāl ‘Abdul Nāsir, President of the United Arab Republic.30 The International Islamic Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, in April 1969 C.E. approved of Family Planning by the Muslim world. A number of Muslim countries including Pakistan (1960 C.E.), Turkey (1965 C.E.), the U.A.R. (1966 C.E.), Morocco (1966 C.E.), Malaysia (1966 C.E.), Tunisia (1966 C.E.), and Iran (1967 C.E.), took up Family Planning as a national programme in the years shown against each, and more Muslim countries of the world are following suit.

THE GOLDEN MEAN IN ISLAM

Islam is a rational religion. In all matters it adopts the Middle Course, which we may call the Golden Mean. A Muslim in his daily prayers, prays to God for guidance in this middle course, which is also called the Right Path (The Qur’an, 1:5). In matters of procreation also there should, therefore, be no objection in Islam to adopt the middle course, without going into the extremes of unrestricted multiplication of children, or nullification of procreation.8 10 11

Family Planning programme is a promotional health service, meant for promoting the health and happiness of all families. This programme conforms more to the Islamic spirit, rather than un-Islamic, as it shows the way to get the right number children giving adequate spacing between them, without in any way killing any human life at any stage. Muslims should therefore, have no hesitation on religious grounds to accept Family Planning wholeheartedly.

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Continued on page 40
The Impact of the Sirah — Life-career of the Prophet Muhammad — on Muslim Reformers and Fashioners of Islamic History

Its effect on the Wahhabi, the Sanusi & the Mahdi movements

By Dr. Husayn Mu’nis

Why non-Muslims think that Islam is a warlike or militant religion.

It has often been asserted that Islam is a warlike or militant religion. Those who maintain this view doubtless base their contention on certain verses of the Qur‘án, in which Muslims are exhorted to become powerful, to accumulate arms, to hold themselves in readiness to defend their community, to carry their message to others and to do their best to get it adopted by them. The reason for this reputation possessed by Islam, the tendency towards the use of force and all that accompanies it — an accusation that Muslims do not deny categorically if it is expressed without arrière-pensée — is not founded solely on the Qur‘ánic verses and their interpretation, but rather on the historical facts relating to the rapid expansion of Islam. For the Qur‘ánic verses which speak of force, which exhort the Believers to do their best to win men to their cause — all these Qur‘ánic verses have their parallels in the Old and the New Testaments and in the Torah.

But there is no doubt that this characteristic of Islam had its first origin in the Sirah (the life-career of Muhammad) or rather the interpretation which he gave to his Mission and to the manner in which he fulfilled this sacred duty. It is true that in a number of passages the Qur‘án insists on the fact that Muhammad was simply a messenger and that as soon as the Divine message had been transmitted, the Prophet’s Mission would have ended. Further, that he would not be held responsible for either man’s acceptance, or his rejection, of the Message, because that contingency came within the province of God alone, and in this domain Muhammad could change nothing. It is equally true that in the Qur‘án there are verses in which members of the Islamic community are recommended to try to win over unbelievers by force if their obstinacy or opposition should happen to constitute a threat to the security of the Faith, but nowhere do we read that this was obligatory, either on the Prophet or on the Faithful generally.

But Muhammad was a man of enterprise. He preferred the hard way, the way of challenge. Instead of merely transmitting the Message, remaining satisfied with making fiery speeches and haranguing his listeners, speeches full of dire threats and horrible forebodings such as were made by most of the prophets of the Old Testament, he took upon himself the task of amplification and demonstration. He would, like a teacher, continue to give practical explanations of the contents of his Message until his Mission had terminated. He would transmit the Message, interpret it, and engage in lengthy discussions with his opponents. He would form a Community of believers at Mecca, and endeavour to win over the entire city to Islam.

Later, when he found it impossible to carry out this plan at Mecca, he conceived the idea of an “emigration” to Medina, and went on to put this plan into action. At Medina he formed another Community, based on the three-fold foundation of faith, organisation and armed strength, and he was successful in winning for that city the supreme triumph of the Faith. He was able to unite the Arab people and set their feet upon the most auspicious road, upon the happiest of adventures that an Eastern people has ever met within the course of history.

It was a work which he planned with the utmost care, and which he carried out with such method and expertise, that he astonished his contemporaries and has never ceased to enthral the minds of Muslims over the course of centuries. It was that life, so abounding in achievements, in set-backs, in trials and in triumphs, that was henceforward to haunt the imagination of Believers, and to trace out for them the path to follow, the programme of action to adopt, and the uphill, and sometimes painful, road to success and it was that life which gave to Islam its characteristics of strength, mastery and the fighting spirit.

The Sirah of the Prophet was the favourite reading matter of men like Nur al-Din Mahmud and Ottoman Caliphs

Thus the life-sketch of the Prophet, the Sirah, was the driving force of the Muslim community during the periods of activity and expansion. Although the Qur‘án pointed out the ideal at which to aim, the Sirah actually marked out the path
to be followed, and the various milestones which would be attained, and passed, during the journey. For men of action in particular, for the initiators of large-scale political movements, for the founders of Islamic kingdoms and empires, the *Sira* has always been their *vade-mecum*, and they have observed its precepts to the very letter. This *Sira* is the one written by Ibn Hisham, the version which was codified, modified, and adapted to the Muslim mentality of the 3rd century, and later, the *Sira* was transformed into sacred history, abounding in miracles and wonderful happenings, absorbingly fascinating and of abounded optimism and assurance. It was the *Sira* which throughout the history of Islam became the favourite reading-matter of every man who had some religious or political ambition. The Shi‘ite propagandists who worked incessantly and tirelessly for the destruction of the Abbasside Empire followed its precepts word for word, Nār al-Dīn Mahmūd (d. 1147 C.E.) would listen, each night, to whole chapters before retiring, and the Ottoman caliphs had several translations made. They would listen to recitations of these translations as much as they would to translations of the Qur‘ān and other works.

But the impact of the *Sira* is more clearly seen in connection with politico-social reform or reconstruction move-ments amongst the Bedouin, for here it seems as though the various episodes in the life of Muhammad are repeated to the very letter. We see the three important phases, or lessons, of the *Sira* faithfully repeated, as if there were a plan drawn up in advance, a plan inspired by the *Sira* itself, based on its three principal phases, and, quite understandably, adapted to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. The first phase, the period of preaching and teaching, was long and arduous. Indeed, it was heroic, for it was followed by the Hegira (“emigration”) of the preacher to an isolated place of refuge, accompanied by a handful of devoted disciples.

Here began the second phase, when the Master formed a homogeneous Community, and transformed it into an army of soldiers composed of enthusiastic converts who were ready to enter upon the stage of World History. Finally, there came the inevitable upsurge, the triumphant march towards the conquest of a kingdom or an empire.

Even as late as the 19th century the history of Muslim movements which were almost contemporary, such as that of the Wahhabis, the Sanusī, and the Mahdi of the Sudan, followed precisely the same pattern. We could understand them better if we had a better knowledge of the *Sira*.

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By Dr. SALIM ‘AMMAR

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam, carrying with it the scientific and philosophical heritage of Greece and Byzantium, and after becoming enriched at the springs of Hindu wisdom and the Syriac, Persian and Sassanide cultures, definitely emerged at the cross-roads of the great civilizations which had preceded it. But it could not avoid the imprint of the mythical thought of the desert Arabs, for whom angels, demons and djinns (mid-way between men and demons), characterised in some vague way the two traditional opposite poles of the Supernatural. In the pre-Islamic conception the soul or “nafs” was of a twofold nature. Man’s body was animated by two vital forces belonging to the invisible realm of the supernatural, the sacred, one of these forces becoming reunited with the underworld, and the other returning to the heavenly domain. Islam accepted this dualism, and, in fact, much of its inspiration came from these beliefs in the plurality of the vital life-forces.

Nevertheless, from that time these terrestrial or preternatural forces became subject to the Divine will. Yet in spite of this governing control, or perhaps because of it, their mission was still to deal with the affairs and the activities of this world, impregnating everything with a vague kind of animism, and controlling the behaviour and the final end of human beings by their beneficent or malevolent intervention. In pre-Islamic Arabia the world of the marvellous, the magical, was centred on the eponymous Ancestor and the “Civilizing Hero”, who played essential roles in the patriarchal society of the desert nomads.

Thus Abraham, the common ancestor of both Jews and Arabs, appeared as the Messenger of God, with the task of restoring the true faith, and Muhammad, the genealogical descendant of Ishmael and the last of this line of prophets, came to restore the original religious purity which had been vitiated and perverted by the passions of men. So that Islam, by embodying from Judeo-Christian monotheism those spiritual values which it embodies, elevated the nomad peoples of arid Arabia from paganism and tribal animism towards a simple and purified universalist rationalism, a rationalism which, by its all-embracing conception of the world, left its imprint on all the multiple activities of human existence.

The message of liberalism and humanism delivered anew to humanity by the Qur’an was to activate for entire centuries the prodigious upsurge of the Sciences, Letters and the Arts, from the banks of the Indus to the Atlantic Ocean, thanks to the spirit of charity and tolerance taught by the new Faith, and the feverish thirst for knowledge on the part of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphs in the Golden Age of Arabo-Islamic civilisation. Following the example of their Greek masters (who preceded them), and of the Encyclopedists of the Renaissance (who were their pupils), the Arab scholars and savants were to embrace, generally speaking, all branches of knowledge. In harmony with the principles and fundamental bases of the new religion, and because of the various sources of culture and civilisation which now became available to them, these scholars were inevitably to give to the things of the spirit a constant and dominant place in the lives and destinies of human beings. At that time philosophy was so closely linked with medicine that the title of Hakim (sage) applied either to a metaphysician (philosopher) or a physician (doctor). Throughout the centuries, in spite of the great importance which they gave to the concrete observation of material facts, for the most part Arab doctors remained great philosophers, constantly enriching the field of their practical experience with the fruit of the most elevated forms of speculation.

As a result of this, the Arab savants gave a remarkable impetus to the “... medicine of the soul”. But since they remained firm believers in the data furnished by the senses and by experience, they were just as much specialists in psychomatics as expert analysts; for they combined the synthetic conceptions of Hippocrates with the meticulous analyses of Galen (in whom, incidentally, they placed more confidence, and whom they knew better). Their habitual tendencies, one might even say their basic principles, postulated, as it were, an intangible axiom, the constant interplay and intermingling of physical and spiritual phenomena, the living and animated unity of the soul with the body in a duality in which there was permanent intimacy, at least in part, until the dissolution of the body at death.

It was, therefore, impossible for them to adopt, or even entertain, the idea of a mechanical kind of pure materialism, as was later to be expounded by doctors like the French physiologist and anatomist, Bichat (d. 1892 C.E.) and the French medical doctor and discoverer of the stethoscope, Laennec (1826 C.E.), despite the fact that they were convinced believers in the constant verification of phenomena by observation and the data furnished by the senses.

The tongue, that is to say, the spoken word, primordial organ of communication, the medium whereby the Divine revelation is expressed through the Qur’an, was also destined to play the highest possible rôle in inter-human relations, and,
firstly, in the alleviation of the suffering undergone by humanity. That is one of the reasons which gave still more impetus to the upsurge of psychotherapy in Arab medicine.

2. INSTITUTIONS

Among the very first hospitals to be built in Islamic countries was the mental institution at Damascus, created in 707 C.E. by the Amir al-Walid Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. Its object was to receive and care for the mentally weak, and a fund constituted from charitable donations was applied to their upkeep, and to their welfare on leaving the hospital.

At Baghdad the “Máristán” was founded in 765 C.E. It was the first autonomous psychiatric hospital known to the world, and was reserved exclusively for mental patients. Soon afterwards similar institutions were established in all the large cities of the Islamic world, beginning with Egypt, from where they spread to Spain and Europe generally by way of North Africa.

At the beginning of the 15th century, the Brothers of St. John of God built at Valencia (Spain), the first European mental hospital. It was modelled on the Cairo establishment (1304 C.E.) built a century previously and itself based on the Máristán of Baghdad. The Brothers were later summoned to France by Marie de Medici, and there they built the psychiatric hospital at Charenton and the “Charité” at Sensl.

3. METHODS OF APPROACH AND MEDICAL TEXTS

The great advance in this form of medical care, the twofold treatment of the body and the mind, could only have been the result of profound theoretical study and practical observation. Over the centuries Arab savants and doctors brought out a multitude of treatises, books, aphorisms, monographs, papers and letters of the most varied kind dealing with the relationship between the body and the mind from a threefold point of view diagnostic, propylactic and therapeutic. It was evident that the type of medicine recommended by the Prophet Muhammad, as indicated in his sayings and precepts, vigorously upheld that inescapable fact, the psychosomatic unity of the human being.

Correct diet is the fundamental basis of all treatment. Intemperance is the cause of all illness. “Anger makes the body sick.” The Prophet declared: “The most favoured among you is he to whom God has given the best kind of physical constitution.” In addition to the invaluable rules of hygiene, the Hadiths, or Sayings of the Prophet, insisted that people who were ill should be given encouragement and spiritual consolation. The Prophet also mentioned the part played by talismans and magical potions and the “Evil Eye”.

(a) IN THE ORIENT

In the early days of Islam the reign of the Umayyad Caliphs at Damascus can be described more or less as the “period of conquests”. In the domain of pure theory more than one example had already given definite indication of the spirit of scientific curiosity and independence which was animating the scientists of Islam at this particular epoch. A number of these scientific truths have been revealed to us in modern times. This is borne out by an aphorism of the “Alchemist” Geber: “Different bodies are composed of the same elements, but in different proportions”, and by another daring opinion, daring for the period in question, which was put forward later by the doctor Najm al-Din Ibn Labbâdi: “The existence and conservation of the body are dependent on the blood, and not on the four fluids, as maintained by the philosophers and the doctors.”

Ja‘bir Ibn Hayyân (702-765 C.E.) laid the first foundations of modern chemistry, although his discoveries emerged, during the Christian Middle Age period, under the guise and heading of “Alchemy”, having as corollary a philosophy of life deeply impregnated with the mysterious and the supernatural.

The alchemic approach manifested itself in the philosophical domain, as the kind of spiritual exegesis which tends to conceal the apparent and lays emphasis on the occult. But whereas the schoolmen of mediaeval Europe became immersed in this aspect almost to the point of total obsession, the Arab scientists were quick to free themselves from the lure of this erroneous conception, and it was Rhazes (d. 923 C.E.), Avicenna (d. 1037 C.E.) and al-Bîrûnî (d. 1030 C.E.) who were to lay the basic foundations of modern chemistry, as the term is understood today.

Meanwhile the real cultural and scientific upsurge had been forging ahead under the Abbaside dynasty of Baghdad, which was the phase of translations and the assimilation of the Greek heritage of erudition and culture. Among the group of Christian translators who, during the Golden Age of the Abbaside Caliphs, gave an appreciable and decisive impetus to the arts and sciences, was the Muslim scholar Ya`qûb al-Kindî (El Kindus) (796-873 C.E.). People called him the “Philosopher of the Arabs”. He was the author of 265 treatises which embraced all the domains of human knowledge, and he wrote a book on the Soul, another on the human Mind, and a third on Reason, of which he unceasingly extolled the supremacy over the dogmatism of tradition.

“Following the period of the first Mu’tazilite theologians, Muslim thought became gradually more and more profoundly influenced by Greek philosophy. Al-Kindî and the famous Brothers of Purity (the İkhwân al-Safa’d) have compared the death of Socrates with that of Jesus Christ and the Shi‘ite martyrs of Karbala in Iraq. To understand Muslim theology, a knowledge of the Egyptian Neoplatonic philosopher, Plotinus (d. 270 C.E.) is almost as indispensable as knowledge of the Qur‘án and the Hadiths, and the same applies to Christian and Jewish theology. In any case, the work of Al-Kindî, which was devoted to the entire range of the domain of science, constituted the most comprehensive encyclopaedia that the world had ever known before the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas (written three centuries later)”. The essential parts of Al-Kindî’s work were translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona, and they strongly influenced the thought of the Arab scholars and scientists who came later, as much as that of the humanists of the Renaissance. In fact, these translations served for several centuries as the indirect “educator” of the Western world. However, as happens to so many pioneers, the “Philosopher of the Arabs”, that truly unique and universally-minded thinker, died at Baghdad about 873 C.E. in the most abject destitution and solitude. To this sad plight he had been driven, in disgrace, together with his Mu’tazilite friends, by the Abbaside Caliph al-Muta’wakkil (d. 861 C.E.).

Rhazes

After the “Period of Awakening” (during the reign of the Umayyad dynasty) the steady advance in Arab medicine had started under the Abbaside Caliphs, when there began the feverish rush to bring out translations, the organisation of medical and para-medical organisations, the extension and development of medical teaching and of hospitals, and, indeed, the appearance of the first well-qualified practitioners. With the decline of the Abbaside period, there followed the
"period of original books", leading on to the culminating point of Arab medicine, reaching its zenith with Rhazes, Hallī Abbās and Avicenna. This period (end of the 9th century) saw the appearance of the first clinical practitioner ‘Ali Ibn Sahl Itībārī, the author of The Paradise of Wisdom. His pupil and disciple, the Persian Ābū Bakr al-Rāzī (Rhazes, 850-923 C.E.), was to raise Arab medicine to heights never before attained.

The immortal author of Continens (a monumental inventory of all the facts and data concerning medicine in both ancient and modern times), is indisputably the greatest doctor of Arab extraction that the world has seen, with the exception of Avicenna, who, however, appears basically to have been more philosopher than doctor. Rhazes was a physicist, a chemist and a mathematician, but he also made some useful studies in psychology, as witness his books The Medicine of the Soul, Reason, The Modalities of Perception, Mental Equilibrium, The Instruct for Enjoyment, the latter corresponding, at least in part, to our present-day "Ibidus". He also wrote a number of very relevant books on such subjects as the imagination, obsession, behavioural troubles and the emotional states.

Rhazes was a philosopher of the liberal type. He rejected esoteric explanations of natural phenomena, making a clear-cut distinction between the domain of observation and experiment and that of geomancy and astrology, which he did not hesitate to identify with trickery and imposture, and which he unmasked in articles which were particularly censorious. He was the first to bring forward the question of alcoholic drinks, which he prohibited to patients who were melancholic and depressed. Instead he recommended certain distractions, such as games of chess.

Avicenna

A century later Avicenna (980-1037 C.E.), the Prince of Scholars, the "Supreme Master", and the most famous of the doctors of Arab extraction, was, it seems, the one who, through his diagnostic and therapeutic research, went the most profoundly into the relationship between a man's body and his manner of thinking. This is not surprising in such a remarkable genius, in a scholar who is specially renowned for his 24 books, on general philosophy, 31 books on metaphysics (among which figures a masterpiece with the significant title of Kitāb al-Shī'ā "The Book of Healing"), 22 works on logic and 23 on psychology.

Avicenna helped in the isolation and individualisation of cerebral diseases such as meningitis, and in minimising the effect of those meningitic phenomena which persist in certain acute affections. He wrote descriptions of the hemiplegias, of apoplexy (which, he explained, had its origin in plethora, contrary to the opinion of Galen), of the central and peripheral types of facial paralysis, and of tumours, which, contrary to the opinion of the Ancients, may be located in the brain.

To Avicenna the "psychologist" we are indebted for some important studies of the memory (fixation and recollection), of obsession, dreams, hallucinations, the perception, imaginative and emotional cerebrovascular states and many other similar disorders. (Cerebrovasculitis = the general impression or vague feeling of ease or malaise resulting from an ensemble of internal sensations, as distinct from the definite sensations of the special senses). Avicenna followed in the footsteps of Hippocrates, and, like his Master, he considered that the form and external aspect of the body always have a meaning. There is a reason for the existence of any kind of deformity, any anatomical deficiency, or superficiality. Thus, by the physical study of a patient, his appearance, his voice, as also of his character and his talents, Avicenna often obtained information which was quite as valuable as that furnished by some of our modern investigational techniques (morpho-psychology).

After Hippocrates, Rufus of Ephesus and Isaac Ibn 'Umrán, Avicenna in his turn dealt with the study of melancholia in his Canon. He pointed out, very justifiably, that "...some people have attributed several types of melancholia to the influence of demons, but they have nothing to do with it". It would seem, however, that the symptoms which he describes with astonishing accuracy go beyond the limits of the present-day nosological classifications, and approximate more nearly to the atypical states of ementia or even schizophrenia.

Hallī ‘Abbās, al-Bīrūnī

After Rhazes and Avicenna, the third Persian doctor of Arab expression was Hallī ‘Abbās, the author of the famous Liber Regius (al-Kitāb al-Malākī). In this splendidly methodical work, written in simple, precise and polished language, and which is in contrast to the Canon of Avicenna, by reason of its very practical character, the first essay deals with moods and temperaments, and the fourth with the practice of sports, the benefits of the open-air life, bathing and dieting.

During this same epoch there lived another famous personality of Persian origin: Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī (973-1030 C.E.), who was one of the greatest scientists that the Arabo-Muslim world has produced, and the outcome of recent research has been to raise him to the level of Avicenna himself, and even higher. Al-Bīrūnī was an astronomer, geologist, historian and philosopher much more than doctor, and he endeavoured to work out a rapprochement between the themes of the Hindu wisdom and Platonico-Pythagorean philosophy on the one hand and the philosophy of the Sufi ascetics of Islam on the other.

Abū al-Hasan Itībārī, Alhazen and al-Baghdādí

Another well-known figure of the 10th century was Abū al-Hasan Itībārī, who came from Tabaristan. In the Preface of his Book of Treatments he distinguishes between two types of doctor. In the first category are those who are not philosophers, who are satisfied simply with treating the illness and going no further into the matter. They remain without culture and real knowledge. In the second category are those doctors who are not limited by the scope of their daily practice, and who are as much philosophers as doctors.

A much more striking figure was that of Ibn al-Haytham ("Alhazen") of the Middle Ages), who lived between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century, and was an astronomer, optician and physicist of genius. He wrote a well-known treatise on the influence of music on humans and animals. On the other hand another writer, Ibn Jazlah (d. 1100 C.E.), the famous author of the Tables of Health (Taqwim al-'Abdān), who lived during the latter half of the 11th century, emphasised the superiority of music, which acts only on the mind, to medicine, which acts only on the body.

Finally, we should mention 'Abd al-Latīf al-Baghdādí (1162-1231 C.E.), who was an anatomist and an early "fore-runner" of Darwin. We are indebted to him for numerous works on comparative psychology and medical papers on language and the functioning of the sense organs.

The great Arab medical schools were famous in their
time for their vast libraries and their model hospitals, which were ideally organised for clinical instruction at the patient's bedside. All doctors worthy of the name should, in their own interests, submit their patients to an interrogation and a thorough examination. Such details should be entered in a register, and should include, in addition to the study of physical indications, the entire anamnesis1 and all the details about the patient's way of living and about his environment.

On this point one doctor, 'Alî Ibn Radwân, who practised at Cairo in the 13th century, expressed himself as follows: "Find out about the state of mind of the patient. Ask him a certain number of questions and try to discover if his replies are reasonable or not. Order him to do a certain number of things in order to check his intellectual faculties and his docility. In this way you will know whether you can rely on an exact observation of your prescriptions. Endeavour to know the nature of his character, to find out what stimulates him, and what depresses him".

(b) IN THE WEST

Corresponding to this unprecedented upsurge of medicine in the East, at the Western extremity of the Arab world (Andalusia and Morocco), medical science also became substantially enriched by the original contributions of its scholars, its scientists, and its men of genius, during the 11th and 12th centuries.

Avenzoar, Averroes, Ibn Hazm and Maimonides

The famous clinical physician Avenzoar of Cordova (Ibn Zuhr, d. 1162 C.E.), showed a certain degree of originality in that he did not, like so many others, plunge deeply into philosophy and philosophical systems. Nevertheless in his book The Comforting of Souls and Bodies, he wrote "We know a good deal about medicine for the body, but the medicine for the soul is much nobler and much more important".

Living at the same time as Avenzoar was his friend and disciple Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (1126-1198 C.E.), who was both doctor and rationalistic philosopher, and of unparalleled intellectual audacity. He was the author of a book dealing with the harmonization of medicine with philosophy. He declared that "...the world exists only in the measure that our minds can understand it". To this he added the famous sentence which was to epitomize the entire Humanism of the Renaissance: "0 men! I am not saying that this science which you call Divine Science is false, but I do say that I know something about human science".

During this period, at Cordova, flourished Ibn Hazm, a moralist, sociologist and Platonist philosopher, who wrote love-poems. He wrote a famous treatise, On Human Character and Behaviour.

Maimonides (1135-1204 C.E.), the spiritual head of Judaism during the Middle Ages, was one of the doctors who gave expression to their genius through the medium of the Arabic language. He also was a native of Cordova, and lived at different times in Spain, Morocco and Egypt. We will mention only one of his numerous works... the book on hygiene entitled: On the Laws of Health, dedicated to Saladin's eldest son. The third chapter contains a complete treatise on "Soul Health", with quotations from the philosophical works of Aristotle and al-Fârâbî. A cure, said Maimonides, is the return to a former state of equilibrium which has been temporarily disturbed by illness, and which must be regained not only through the medium of bodily resources, but through the powers of the mind.

Ibn Khaldûn

And then we come to that delightful historian and sociologist of the Maghreb, Ibn Khaldûn (born at Tunis 1332 C.E., died at Cairo in 1406), who was to bring forward decisive solutions to the problems which had for so many years baffled the doctors, for he vigorously proclaimed his belief in the definite influence of environment on the individual, the predominance of actual living experience over heredity, of the acquired over the inherited, of culture over nature. "Man is the child of his habits and his environment and not the child of his physical nature and his body-fluids".

1 Anamnesis = a patient's remembrance of the early stages of his illness.
turn, knew only too well from first-hand experience the instability of political conditions during a period which abounded in unrest and disorders, and a period which soon proved to be the harbinger of the progressive decline of the Arabo-Muslim world.

4. THERAPEUTIC METHODS

The Arab doctors, when treating illness, used practically all the therapeutic methods known to-day. They were certainly lacking in accuracy as regards their scientific foundations, but their basic principles were already drawn up and their codification established for all time.

Thus, the various forms of psychotherapy, based on moral comfort and spiritual encouragement, are forcefully proclaimed in the Qur'án and the Hadiths (or Sayings of the Prophet). In this connection the great Rhazes declared: “It is always important, when dealing with a patient, that his doctor make suggestions of good health and affords him comfort by giving him reasons for hoping, even if, in his heart of hearts, he cannot find any reason for hoping, because the state of the body is closely influenced by the vicissitudes of the soul”.

In the Generalities of his *Canon*, Avicenna supported the principle that psychic remedies must always come to the help of treatment with medicine. They must complete the treatment by increasing the patient’s ability to resist. “We must hold the view”, he wrote, “that one of the best kinds of treatment, and one of the most effective, consists in augmenting the mental and psychic energies of the patient, in encouraging him to fight, in creating around him a pleasant atmosphere, in letting him near good music, in putting him in contact with people whom he likes, whom he respects and trusts”.

Psychotherapy (al-Ilaj al-Nafsani) . . . a branch of medicine which gave rise to a number of anecdotes . . . became very popular with many practitioners, who modified and diversified its directives as and when demanded by the profound and complex elements of the human personality.

Both before and after Avicenna, a fairly large group of scholars and philosophers, doubtless attracted and influenced by the mystical tendencies of Islam, applied themselves to an absorbing study — exploring the depths of the human soul. Among these figured Ibn Maskawayh, the Imám al-Ghazali, Al-Farabì, and one of the greatest philosophers of the Arab Western world . . . Ibn al-Arabì. To these philosophers the world is indebted for some admirable analytical studies on the injurious effects of the passions, and of anger, on the balance between body and mind, and on the various ways of preventing the onset of such states and of mastering them.

Music and song as curative agents

As well as being great poets the Arabs have always been fond of music and song, interpreting, through the medium of richly-rhymed and colourful melodies, some heartfelt sentiment . . . the passing of a dear one, the joys and the pangs of love, fear, jealousy, courage in war, the rhythm of daily work, revenge on the enemy. The Pythagorean musical scale (probably of Semitic origin), which had been adopted by the Persians and the Byzantines, was used by the Arabs up to the 13th century. But whereas the vocal music of antiquity was metric and not rhythmic (divided into long syllables and short syllables like the ancient verse), Arab music was based on a definite pronounced rhythm, which greatly facilitated the development of “barred” music.

The Arabs remained perennially loyal to music of the melodic kind, and although they preferred vocal to instrumental music, it is interesting to note that they bequeathed to the Western world most of their musical instruments. It is easy to understand that since the Arab savants had become experts in the musical art, they used it widely to mollify and calm their patients, and particularly the most unfortunate of these — the mental cases. However, hospital rooms reserved especially for games and pastimes, and concerts of music, were not maintained solely for mental patients, but were also to be found in general hospitals, for the use of every type of patient, without distinction. In fact, some doctors classified the different temperaments of the patients according to the way in which they reacted to this or that musical mode, to this or that melody. In consequence they adapted their therapeutic methods in numerous cases of internal malady.

Do we realise sufficiently to-day that the experiments carried out by Pavlov on different types of nervous individuals gave an added significance to such relationship, in that branch of medicine known as cortico-visceral pathology? In fact, the techniques of relaxation and amusement by games, physical exercise through sport, concerts of music and so on, which were so liberally made available to the mentally sick, became almost an essential element of the healing process, a part of the standard routine. Rhazes strongly recommended games of chess for depressed and melancholic subjects . . . Avicenna gave measured “doses” of physical activity, during daily occupation and sport, and these were administered so as to follow carefully the variations in the amount of sleep and the patient’s intake of food.

Hot and cold bath treatment given to mental patients

After Rhazes, Arab practitioners mostly made use of hot, tepid and cold baths, and even la douche Écossaise (successive hot and cold showers), to such a degree that therapeutic bathing (balneotherapy) was practically the sole essential treatment given to mental subjects up to the 20th century. Abrupt shock methods, abrupt but sometimes effective, were used by many doctors in certain cases of stupor, agitation or nervous hysteria. These methods were the fore-runners of the modern techniques of “convulsive treatment” (e.g., E.C.T.—electro-convulsive therapy). An interesting point in this connection is that Avicenna recommended beating with canes and exercises on the see-saw in cases of melancholia. Elsewhere, and in numerous cases of internal illness, psychotherapy, whether reinforced or not by physical or chemical means, was often practised with success. Such treatment included fumigation, the inhalation of perfumed vapours, the tickling of parts of the body, or “electric torndoeing,” the fish of the same name, in hysterical or allied states.

Arab doctors raise the standard of psycho-pharmacology

That branch of science known as “psycho-pharmacology” dates from the very earliest times, and the Arabs, helped by the considerable abundance and scope of their pharmacopoeia, raised it in their time to a degree of efficiency and usefulness never before attained. For instance, the Greeks considered opium to be very dangerous and used it only on rare occasions, whereas the Arabs developed more uses for it, especially as a powerful sedative for inducing sleep in nervous patients. They knew about the effects of “rye-ergot” (or “spurred rye”) . . . rye which has been attacked by a type of poisonous fungus. This substance, according to Ibn al-Baytár, is a violent poison which, among its various properties, causes disturbance of the reasoning faculties. Among the medical substances which react on the nervous system, the Arab doctors did pioneer work with aconite, Indian hemp and amber. However, the

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18

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
utilisation of this rich and extensive pharmacopoeia was, generally speaking, carried out in a careful and prudent manner. Rhazes and Avenzoar never ceased to give warning that the misuse of remedies, far from conserving health, would, on the contrary, lower the resistance of the body. In this connection we recall the celebrated aphorism of Rhazes: "Whenever you can effect a cure through the agency of the patient's food and drink, do not use medicine. And whenever you can use a simple-type medicine, do not use a compound type". Avicenna was the first to have thought of the idea of "conditioning" medical tablets and drugs by covering them with very thin gold and silver wrappings, and from that time the practice became widespread. Avicenna was thus the first doctor to "gild the pill" in both the material and the figurative sense of the term.

According to the Greek theory there were four essential bodily "humours", or fluids. The Arabs made use of this hypothesis, coupling it with the conception of a plurality of "vital breaths", which were thought to energize the different organs in a permanent interaction with the external macrocosm. Working along these lines the Arabs were responsible for some important developments in organotherapy and otopharmacy. In our modern world we know of the powerful effects of this treatment on the amelioration, or the aggravation, of many psychic troubles. ("Organotherapy" and "ototherapy" = treatment by administration of extracts of animal organs, especially of the ductless glands). Incidentally, it was the "humoral" theory which for centuries held complete sway over the whole of Europe, until the arrival of Pasteur, who revealed the real causes of so many diseases, causes which had, up to that time, remained unknown. Can we therefore blame the Arab doctors for remaining satisfied with the theories of the Greeks, when recent researches have led us back to the "humoral" theory, to which we now give other more "sophisticated" names and which, it is true, we study with more skill and precision?

5. DECLINE AND RENAISSANCE

During the period from the 8th to the 13th centuries, Arab doctors were in advance of the rest of the world in the treatment of the mentally sick. Unfortunately this branch of therapy ceased to make progress after that period, and by the 15th century it had definitely declined into quackery and imposture. With the retrogression of medical knowledge and the perversion or religious principles, the superstitions and legends connected with the "madman" again seized on the imaginations of the poorer and ignorant classes. Little by little the Mâristans all fell into a deplorable state, even while new ones were being built. For example, at Tunis, one was created in 1663 by Hamouda Báshíd, and the Takîyâh (charitable hospice) was built in 1775, but they were poor imitations of the Turkish Bimâristans. In fact, after the foundation of numerous hospitals by the Saljuk Turks in the 13th century, all of which were equipped with wards reserved for mental illness, Mehmet II (the Conqueror), in 1470, built a remarkable institution at Istanbul. It was remarkable from a twofold point of view... from both the architectural and the organisaional aspects... to such a degree that during a visit which he made, the famous French psychiatrist Moreau de Tours described it as the "standard model for hospices", and one which, in his estimation, came nearest to the ideal of Esquirol (French psychiatrist, 1772-1840).

At Tunis, at the beginning of the 18th century, the Princess 'Azizah 'Uthmânâh, grand-daughter of 'Uthmân Dey, bequeathed her immense fortune to works of charity, and substantial donations were made towards helping the sick and the needy. Priority was given to mental sufferers, for whom entertainments and concerts were arranged, and these have continued up to a recent date.

In Morocco, the Hospice of Siddi Faraj, at Fez, which dated from the time of the Merinide Princes, had given refuge to the mentally afflicted since the 15th century, thanks to substantial charitable donations. This generous help enabled the Andalusian doctor Faraj al-Khazrajî (after whom the hospice, was named), to bring solace and comfort to those unfortunate people through the medium of concerts of music and various recreative activities, and this was at a time when, in Europe, the burning of "witches" and "sorcerers" was at its height!

According to the psychiatrists L'woff and Sérieux: "... in 1911, at Tangiers, Arzila, E-Arrâch, al-Ksar, Fez. Salé and Casablanca, there still existed charitable establishments, where refuge was given to the necessitous sick, to vagrants and to the mentally ill."

However, with the feverish revival of astrology, sorcery, and the slavish belief in talismans and spells, mental medicine, like ordinary or "physical" medicine, gradually and inexorably deteriorated into the cult of the "holy men", the "derwishes" and the "marabouts". And how well this state of affairs is described by R. P. J. Magnin: "Between a tradition which was, at its origins, authentically scientific, but which had become tarnished with the passage of time, and an empirical savoir-faire often tainted with magic, the distinction, in the ensembale, became more and more difficult to determine, especially as the two "systems" had always overlapped, even up to the present time, the second becoming all the more vigorous as the sources of the first gradually became exhausted."

Nevertheless, in the first half of the 13th century, the famous Algerian doctor, 'Abd ar Razzaq al-Jaza'iri did credit and honour to his illustrious predecessors. At a time when the Arab world was teeming with ignorance and superstition, this essentially pragmatic clinical practitioner, the author of Kasîf al-Rumûs ("The Solving of Mysteries"), gave no credit whatsoever to superstitious beliefs and made no allusion to them, nor did he place any value on cabalistic signs and mystical invocations.

It was not before the 19th century that the community began vaguely to sense the first beginnings of the "revival" that is taking place to-day, a revival which, by a kind of secondary shock-reaction, was to bring about the inevitable renewal of contact with the West.

To-day, when a profound and world-wide interest is being focused on the future scope of pyschomatics in medicine, Arab doctors will be able to follow up all new departures, discoveries and methods, and they will do this much more easily than could their predecessors, those predecessors who, following in the path of the noble Hippocratic tradition, have already blazed the trail so admirably for those who will follow them.

When, in retrospect, we examine the objective envisaged, the modus operandi, and the knowledge accumulated by those who developed the time-honoured "Medicine of the Soul", the pioneer form of psychotherapy as known to the early Arab doctors, we cannot but render due honour to the precision and the insight of those enthusiastic and devoted workers. Indeed, their patient labour is to-day bringing new confirmation of the appropriateness, the precision, and the continuity of the neo-Hippocratic medicine of modern times.
An Examination of the Claim that Cyprus is Greek

The Concept of Enosis is more Emotional than Historical

A Brief History of Cyprus

History means many things to different people. And different people make many different uses of it. To the historian, and the student, it is a chronicle of events generally combined with commentaries on how and why they happened as they did. But even in this academic field there is plenty of controversy and differences in opinion. The truly impartial historian is a very rare creature indeed. One has only to compare the same events described in English history books and in American history books, to realise this fact. To the novelist history is a source of material which he more often than not twists out of perspective to a remarkable degree. But it is in the hands of the politician that history suffers most. To him, history is a means of justifying whatever it is that he has just done, or is about to do, or wants to do. And if history does not suit his arguments, he is quite prepared to distort it, amend it or, if necessary, re-write it.

In Cyprus the Greek Cypriots use history for one purpose only, and that is to support their political aim of uniting the island with Greece — Enosis.

The case for Enosis is based — by the Greek speaking inhabitants of the island — on the proposition that they are Greeks, that Cyprus has always been a Greek island, and that they are the descendants of Greeks.

Before going into this proposition, however, it is necessary to have a look at the facts of history.

The brief factual history of Cyprus:

Most reliable recent research carries the history of the island back to 3,700 B.C., when Cyprus seems to have been inhabited by an enterprising people whose origins are obscure. Neolithic Cypriots were of a short-headed stocky type, quite distinct from any known contemporaries on the neighbouring mainland. They used stone implements and vessels, and lived along river beds in settlements of circular type huts.

The First Bronze Age, as far as Cyprus was concerned, attracted settlers from Anatolia, who were already acquainted with metal working. (cf. the copper and iron relics found in the Hittite settlements of Anatolia 2500-2100 B.C.) and who are credited with being the first to exploit the copper resources of the island. Rock-cut tombs of the period contain the distinctive red pottery and other relics common to settlements of the same period in neighbouring Anatolia. Around 2000 B.C., the Phoenicians were also beginning to settle along the coasts of the island.

By the late Bronze Age copper in Cyprus had begun to attract the attention of the then powerful states in the area. Egypt started to take an interest. In 1530 B.C., Cyprus is recorded, under the name of Alasia, as a tributary of Egypt under Thothmes III, although the island remained open to traders from the Mycenaean Empire who brought in the pottery and vessels of that culture that have been found in the island.

During the sack of Troy, some Trojan, and probably Spartan remnants, fleeing from the ten years' war along the Turkish coasts are said to have found refuge and settled in Cyprus. About the same time groups of Archæans and
Dorians moving eastwards, found a home in Cyprus. This was the period that saw the rise of the petty city states in the island.

By late eighth century B.C., Cyprus had become divided into a number of the type of petty city states which were a feature of the Mediterranean at that time, all owing allegiance to, and being tributaries of the Assyrian Empire. These petty states were set up individually by such different races as the Phoenicians, Egyptians, Syrians and Anatolians as well as Archaeans, Dorians and Spartans.

It was over this period that Cyprus once again reverted to Egyptian rule.

In 525 B.C., the island was absorbed into the Persian Empire by Cambyses. In 391 B.C., Evagoras, king of the city states of Salamis, raised a revolt against the Persians, and attempted to form a union with other city states in the island, but Persia sent a punitive expedition, which put down the revolt.

The island came under the nominal control of the Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, for a period of ten years.

On Alexander’s death, the Egyptians yet again took control.

In 58 B.C., Cyprus became a Roman province, and on the division of the Empire, it became a part of the Eastern half. Although monophysite under the Eastern Empire the island was subjected to repeated Arab raids, chief among which were the conquest by the Caliph ‘Uthmán in 644 C.E., and that of Hárun al-Rashid in 802 C.E. From 965 C.E., the Eastern Empire re-established a greater degree of control.

In 1191 C.E., King Richard (Coeur de Lion) of England occupied the island, but later sold it to the Knights Templar, who in turn finding the island burdensome transferred it, at Richard’s request, to the dispossessed King of Jerusalem; thus introducing a three hundred year period of Frankish rule.

In 1489 C.E., Cyprus fell to the Republic of Venice. The Venetian Administration, elaborate, but often corrupt and inefficient, laboured under the excessive control exercised by the Signory, which spent on Cyprus little more than one-third of the revenue that it drew from the island. Taxation was crippling, and the Orthodox Church of the Eastern Empire was all but stamped out.

The Orthodox Archbishopric had been abolished in 1725 C.E., and over the centuries, particularly under the Venetians, it became virtually impossible to practise the Orthodox faith, except in make-shift churches in caves high in the mountains.

Turkish conquest of Cyprus in 1571 C.E.

In 1571 C.E., the Turks conquered the island by defeating the Venetian overlords. The conquest was hailed by the indigenous population as a liberation. Serfdom was abolished, taxation was eased considerably and more evenly distributed. The Christian (Orthodox) population was granted a large measure of autonomy in the running of their own affairs. The Archbishopric was restored, and the concept of the Ethnarch was evolved by the Turks, whereby the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church in the island became the temporal as well as the spiritual leader of his community. In 1878 C.E., Turkey leased the island to Great Britain in return for a promise by the British to assist Turkey in the event of Russian aggression against her. In 1914 C.E., with Turkey on the opposite side, Britain annexed Cyprus, this situation being regularised by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 C.E.

In 1959-1960 C.E., independence was negotiated through international treaties (the Zurich and London Agreements) between Britain, Turkey and Greece, and the two Communities in the island.

In December 1963 C.E., the Greek Cypriot rebellion broke out following the delivery of an ultimatum by Archbishop Makarios to the Turks ("these proposals are not for discussion") in November 1963. The cause of the rebellion was the Greek Cypriots’ desire to overthrow the Constitution of the Republic, in order to proclaim the union of Cyprus with Greece—Enosis.

An examination of “what is Greek?”

First of all, before going into the question as to whether something is, or is not Greek, it would be as well to examine what is “Greek”.

Before 1830 C.E., when modern Greece obtained her independence from the Ottomans, there was no such thing as Greece. Prior to 1830 C.E., if you lived within the borders of what is today Greece, you would have been an Athenian, a Spartan, Macedonian, Corinthian, Dorian, Boeotian or something else. There was no such thing as Greek except in literary works.

Now the Cypriot claim to be Greek is not based on a relationship created after 1830 C.E.; it is propounded on the basis of a continuing relationship from ancient classical times, which makes the claim even more unreal.

In the days when the Athenians, the Spartans, Macedonians, and all the rest, were performing their homeric deeds, most of these city states were continually at war with each other. From time to time, two or three or more would unite with each other in order to wage against another group, only to quarrel and start fighting each other again after a period. If the Greek speaking inhabitants of Cyprus claim to be Athenians, or Spartans, or Boeotians, or Macedonians, or something, then there might be something in their claim—if it was true.

The names Graeci and Graecia, as universal names for the people and land, were first used by the Romans who, for convenience, and probably in ignorance, extended to the whole peninsula the name of the first tribe they encountered, who were the inhabitants of Dodona in the Epirus.

Even the designation Hellenes, which modern Greeks make synonymous with “Greeks” only applied to a few. In the epics of Homer the Hellenes were the people of Phthiotis in Southern Thessaly.

Therefore, for any people in Cyprus living between, say, 200 B.C. (Minoan times) and 58 B.C. (Roman times) to claim a relationship with “Greece”, is, historically, impossible. And is nothing more than an emotional myth—truly a Greek myth.

It is true that from time to time over the centuries groups from one or other of the city states in what is today the Greek peninsula migrated—generally fleeing from some war or other—and formed small settlements in Cyprus; Salamis, Soli, Curium and Marium are examples. But then at the same time plenty of other peoples in this part of the world, as, for example, the Egyptians, Syrians, Anatolians and Phoenicians, founded colonies in places such as

Continued on page 38
THE ROMANCE STORY OF LAYLA AND MAJNUN

An Eastern Love-story born among the Tents of the Desert
(Variations of the theme in various Muslim countries—Iran, India, Pakistan & Turkey)

The Khamsahs of Nizami, Amir Khusraw, Jami, Nava’i & Fuzuli

By Husayn Rofe

The origin of the romance story in Arabia

In Islamic history, the Arabs have largely been responsible for a fertilising influence, the Persians for incubating and yielding a rich cultural harvest. An excellent example is the story of Layla and Majnun, a tragedy telling of two youthful lovers, twin souls brutally sundered by the conventions and interests of their age. The motif is familiar to the West in the story of Romeo and Juliet, to which that of these Arab children has often been compared; the latter are even more widely known throughout the world of Islam than the Italian pair immortalised in the play by Shakespeare. We shall see how their romance has followed almost everywhere in the steps of the message of Islam.

In the Kitâb al-Aghâni, or Book of Songs, a vast unique compendium of the early Arab poetry, we read scattered fragments of the tragedy: a young desert Arab of the Banû ‘Amir named Qays became attached to his childhood playmate Laylâ, from whom he could not bear separation. When forcibly parted from her, he lost his reason and was generally known henceforth as Majnûn (the madman). Eventually the two sweethearts pined away of broken hearts. This theme of child-lovers, driven to distraction in their innocence by a society blind to their sufferings, emerges in seventh century Arabia, not long after the advent of the Prophet Muhammad himself; we are told that Majnûn was a real figure and that he composed immortal poems to celebrate his beloved. Fragments of these remain, genuine and spurious; they fired the Arab imagination and formed the theme of countless songs; in fact, the motif was to inspire the greatest poets of Islam in several countries, though the Arab world, having produced the theme, gave it little further thought. Arabic literature is almost the only literature in Islam unable to boast of a great work immortalising the lovers, perhaps because the epic in general, and romantic love in particular, is a genre which appealed little to the Arab mind. Arabic literature concerned itself either with sciences related to the faith or with Court poetry celebrating pleasures of the senses. In any case, convention did not encourage the immortalisation of a specific beloved, even less that of a pair of lovers. Many of the great Arab poets had sung praises of their ladies, but that was a personal account, largely confined to the pre-Islamic period, the Jâhilîyah. Such, in fact, were the poems of Majnûn himself; once the pair was no more, only hazy and scattered details of the couple remained.

The romance takes form on the shores of the Caspian
Nizâmi’s Khamsah

Undoubtedly, legends of the tragic couple must have circulated widely and persistently; for five centuries later we find an Azerbaijanî (or Azeri) provincial ruler on the shores of the Caspian Sea at Bâkû, and on the frontier of the Christian world, commanding a noted poet to compose an epic about the lovers. The Muslim world had changed much in the past five centuries: Persians had gained control of the administration and developed a tradition of great poetry, while the Turkish influx had spread from Central Asia into Anatolia to control the region as part of the Saljûk Empire.

This local ruler was Abû Muzaffar Akhtisân, the Shirvanshah, or ruler of Shirvan province. The poet whom he commissioned to produce the work is known to history by his takhlîlî, or pseudonym, of Nizâmî. The prince could hardly have foreseen how the genius of this poet would spawn a host of imitators throughout the Middle East for more than four centuries. Nizâmî wrote in all five great epics, known as his Khamsah (Quintet) or Panj Ganj (Five Treasures). Each of these was written in a different metre, treating of a distinct theme; it was to become fashionable for Persian poets and their imitators to produce their own khamsahs, treating of similar materials, endeavouring to display originality in their handling of time-honoured themes. The third of these epics was the story of Laylâ and Majnûn, and other poets were to produce their versions later in India, Turkistân, Mesopo-
Epic poetry had long been a favourite genre among the Persians. Nizami was probably of pure Persian descent on his father's side, though he tells us his mother was a Kurd. In more recent times, the Turkish-speaking population of Azerbaijan tried to claim the distinguished poet for their own race, but there seems little to justify the attempt. Nizami was born in the town of Ganjâb in Azerbaijan, and lived from about 1140 C.E. to 1210 C.E., and never seems to have travelled beyond the confines of his own province despite his wide circle. He was a pious Sunni with high moral standards, unwilling to prostitute his art according to the fashion of his day by writing panegyrics with extravagant praise of any upstart prince willing to pay for the privilege of having his name transmitted to posterity. It was of course customary to find some patron to guarantee the poet's livelihood, and a few verses were always inserted in his honour. Thus, Nizami's epic is dedicated to the Shirvanshah who commanded him to compose it. Originally, Nizami was rather unwilling to undertake the task, feeling that the story was far too sketchy to provide material for an epic of substance. It is all the more remarkable that he was able to make of such limited materials a poem destined to find so many imitators.

Poetry was truly the passion of Nizami's life, and he composed this work quickly, at the rate of over a thousand couplets a month, there being about 4,600 in all. Somewhat petulantly, he relates in the poem:

"These more than 4,000 verses were recited in four months; Had other work been eschewed, 14 nights would have sufficed."

When he wrote it, he was about 47 years old. Since it is originally an Arab tale, Nizami gives it a conventional desert setting among the simple bedouin; not surprisingly, the protagonists are utterly Persian in spirit. The metre Nizami chose for the poem was the haiz-i musaddas (ma'ālidun ma'ālidun fa'ālidun). In his treatment of this Islamic prototype of hopeless romantic love, he discourses widely in his preambles on such subjects as the prophetic ascension. The basic account of the lovers is as follows:

The Qays-Majnûn romance in Nizami's Khamsah

Qays is born to the chief of the Banû 'Amir after he has prayed for a son. During his early schooldays, the boy meets Laylá, a girl of the same tribe. They fall in love at first sight and their constant striving to be together leads to gossip. Laylá is taken away, whereupon Qays loses his reason and receives the name of Majnûn. His father then asks for the girl's hand in marriage on his behalf, but is rejected on account of his son's mental derangement. Then he advises Majnûn to make a pilgrimage to the Ka'bah to beg for Divine assistance to help him forget his passion; the boy makes the journey but asks God rather to strengthen his love. He wanders around reciting poetry, some of which is conveyed to his beloved. Laylá reciprocates by composing her own poems and throwing them out into the street, whence they are brought to Majnûn. Meanwhile, a rich suitor presents himself, and the parents gladly betroth her, procrastinatinf, however, on the grounds that she is ill. When her lover learns she is to be wed, his paroxysms of despair lead him to abandon human habitations and run naked with the wild beasts in the wilderness.

Laylá has been meanwhile married off and her husband has died. Unable to bear the situation, not long after she too passes away. Majnûn visits her grave, retires for a while to the desert, but cannot remain away long. Back at the grave, he prays for death and promptly collapses and expires. For a year, his death remains unknown owing to the wild beasts roaming around the spot and guarding his remains. The tribe at last find the corpse and bury it next to that of Laylá. The grave becomes a centre of pilgrimage for lovers whose prayers are magically granted. Both in the grave and in Paradise, the lovers at last attain the union so long denied them.

The Indian poet, Amir Khusraw's Khamsah

After another century and a half had elapsed, the theme was once more adopted by the greatest Persian poet in India, Amir Khusraw of Uttar Pradesh, whose father had come there as a refugee from the Mongol avalanche and married an Indian woman. Amir was born in 1253 C.E. as the second Mongol wave under Hulagu Khan was advancing on Baghdad to eliminate the Caliphate. He was the favourite pupil of the great saint of Delhi, Nizamuddin Awliya Chishti. In fact, they died almost simultaneously and were buried next to each other. The poet's khamsah was later highly regarded by Hâfiz, Persia's prince of lyric poets, who treasured his own copy and was much influenced by Amir Khusraw.

The poems of Amir are not on a par with the quintet of Nizâmi, though the epic of Laylâ and Majnûn is the greatest of five works. It was the third chronologically, being composed in 1298 C.E.

The Persian poet, Jâmi's Haft Awrang

Apart from a host of lesser lights who need not concern us here, one other great poet in Persia dealt with our theme. This was Jâmi, who was born in the vicinity of Herat, and grew up at the brilliant court of the Timurid Sultan Husayn Bayqara, enjoying the patronage and friendship of both the Sultan and his foster-brother, the Maecenas and distinguished Turkı writer Mir 'Ali Shir Nâvâ'i. It is interesting to note that while Nizâmi had come from the north-west regions of Persia, present-day Azerbaijan, Jâmi came from the north-east frontier, in what is now Afghanistan, and where in his lifetime Persian and Turkı (Chagha-tî, or Eastern Turkish) were competing for literary pre-eminence. He flourished in the fifteenth century and died in 1492 C.E., as the last Muslims were being evicted from Spain and Columbus was setting foot on American soil.

Jâmi took all learning for his province and also wrote in Arabic. Although he was unquestionably head and shoulders above any other Persian poet of his century, his work was not to enjoy the recognition it deserved, since within a decade of his death, Persia fell to the Shi'i Safavid dynasty. Jâmi was a Sûfi of the Naqshbandi fraternity, and the Shi'ı movement was inimical to Sufism, for a simple reason: while the Sûfis believe in salvation through effort, the Shi'ıs are convinced this can only come about through the intercession of the Imam. As they gained control of Persia, they enforced new standards which discouraged independent thought and mystical speculation. Persia never produced a great poet after Jâmi, and the age of classical literature came to an end with him. During his lifetime, he was held in high esteem as far away as Istanbul, when Muhammad the Conqueror and his son Bâyazid both sought to attract him.

Not content with a khamsah, Jâmi went on to make of it a septet, known as the Haft Awrang or Seven Thrones (the name also Persian for the constellation Ursa Major). His Laylâ and Majnûn is the sixth of these poems, was composed
The Chaghata'i poet, Navâ'i's Khamash

Navâ'i and Jâmi both started to compose their khamshahs in the same year (1483 C.E.), the former in Chaghata'i, the latter in Persian. Navâ'i was not only one of the three greatest writers in Chaghata'i, he was also the person whose single-handed efforts raised it to the standard of a respected literary medium. A wealthy aristocrat who performed many public social services for his community, and a patron of the arts who himself displayed great versatility and talent, he is also important as the first person ever to have produced poetry of high quality in any language of the Turkish family, and is thus also a forerunner of Ottoman poetry.

In his poem, Navâ'i acknowledges his debt to both Nizâmî and Amîr Khusraw, and pays tribute to Jâmi as “a revealer of secrets of the Truth”. In Turki, he retained the hazaj metre of his Persian predecessors. He finished the work before Jâmi. In the Turki version, Majnûn’s father chains him up at home as a schoolboy on account of complaints received from Laylâ’s father. He bursts his bonds and flees to the desert. Navâ'i’s work is characterised by the introduction of many other innovations.

The Turkish poet, Fuzûlî’s Khamshah

Just before these two poets of Herat started to work on their khamshahs, another Turkish-speaking poet was born near Baghdad. This was Fuzûlî, an Azerbaijani subject of the White Sheep Turkmen dynasty, who saw his homeland successively captured by Ismâyîl, the Safavid Shah of Persia, and Sulaymân the Magnificent of Turkey. He was a Shi'i, wrote in Azeri, which does not greatly differ from Ottoman Turkish, desired to visit Turkey but never did so, and died of plague in 1556 C.E., though already rather an old man at the time.

He was not originally an Ottoman subject but the Western Turks regard him as one of their own, in fact, as their greatest poet. It is interesting to note how those who chose to deal with the theme of Laylâ and Majnûn have been respectively recognised as the most eminent in their field in Persia, Indo-Persian, Chaghata'i and Western Turkish respectively.

Even at school, Fuzûlî was nurtured from a tender age principally on erotic poetry, and by the age of 20 he had established his own reputation as a poet. He was greatly influenced by the work of Navâ'i, but somewhat surprisingly affects to ignore the poem of Laylâ and Majnûn that had been composed by him sixty years earlier. His own romance of the lovers was written in 1535 C.E., once again in the traditional hazaj metre. It is one of his two great masterpieces, the other being the Divân. It does not appear that he produced a khamshah, despite claims by some biographers to the contrary.

Fuzûlî tells us in his version that the lovers were so close in spirit that when Laylâ had a vein opened, blood spurted from Majnûn’s arm. It may be recalled that it is reported of the nineteenth century Indian saint Ramâkîrishnâ that stripes were seen to appear on his back when he watched another man being beaten. Here Fuzûlî has added a shrewd touch, possibly based on an incident from his personal experience. Unlike the other writers on the theme, he takes the trouble to warn us explicitly in his introduction that the poem is an allegory of the soul’s quest for union with the Divine. His work is said to have remained unsurpassed in Turkish poetry.

Ignoring a number of lesser writers who tried their hand at the evergreen theme, we may regard Fuzûlî as being the last of the great poets who re-echoed down the centuries the woeful tale of true lovers destined to remain apart until death; a tale that owes much of its popularity to the deep-seated human yearning for union with such an affinity.
A Look at the Past—some Seventy Years Ago

A Record of the Ways and Means
Theodor Herzl employed for Achieving the Foul Aims of Zionism against the Muslim World

In the Contemporaneous Muslim World No Traces of Awareness of the Zionist Danger!

This is an article based on newly opened archives of the British government. The story of Herzl’s activities after 1897 until his death has been overshadowed by the fame of his successor, Chaim Weizmann. Here a part of it (from 1902 to 1904 C.E.) is told with enough detail to make clear how Herzl set the pattern of Zionist activity, and how much Weizmann learned or inherited from Herzl.—Ed.

Zionist efforts to lure the Sultan of Turkey

Did Theodor Herzl’s negotiations with the British in the years 1902-1904 over possible Jewish settlements in Sinai and East Africa constitute a revealing and perhaps necessary prelude to the Balfour Declaration—more than a decade later?

At the heart of any appreciation of these events is the question of Herzl’s conception of his and Zionism’s role in achieving the primary objective of the Balfour Programme1 “...to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law”.

Herzl was the first to perceive that only by setting up a representative and worldwide Jewish organization, which would transfer and elevate the discussion of the Jewish problem from the obscurity of petty societies to a position commanding universal publicity and only by adopting the diplomatic methods of the political world would the interest and attention of powerful governments, necessary for the solution of the [Jewish] problem, be aroused.1

Herzl’s actions bear out that he was under no illusion as to how Zionism’s primary objective would be fulfilled. There could be no reliance on sympathy and altruism in obtaining the requisite support for his efforts. Herzl’s actions were ever sensitive to the requirements of Realpolitik and he behaved as one who appreciated the need for a quid pro quo arrangement to seal a firm commitment of support.

Initially, Herzl pursued a direct course toward his objective. In his Jewish State (1896) he proposed that in return for Palestine the Zionists would be prepared to rescue Turkey from her financial difficulties.

During preliminary negotiations with the Sultan and his ministers, it became clear to Herzl that major power support for Zionism would be required before the Sultan acceded to granting a charter for Jewish settlement in Palestine. It was at that point that England and the British Empire loomed large in Herzl’s calculations. Herzl did not seek straightforward British support for Zionist objectives in Palestine. The “Archimedian point” which Britain represented for Herzl arose through his interest in the Mediterranean and, specifically, Cyprus, al-Arish and the Sinai Peninsula—all proximal to Palestine.

Herzl turns to the British for a settlement of the Jews in Cyprus as a springboard for his ultimate sinister aim

By the summer of 1902, Herzl had concluded that a simple, direct deal with the Sultan was not possible. The Zionist offer to assist with the regulation of the finances was not a sufficient sop to the Sultan for him to grant the charter for Palestine. At this point Herzl sought to strengthen

* Courtesy, the Editor, Issues (a Journal of Independent Jewish Inquiry), New York, Vol. 22, Nos. 3-4.
† The first International Zionist Congress met at Basle, Switzerland in 1897.
his bargaining hand. He concluded that if only Jewish settlements could spring up in Cyprus, at al-'Arish and the remainder of the Sinai peninsula, the Sultan might have second thoughts over Palestine. Herzl had arrived at this conclusion, in part, through the influence of the Zionist, Davis Trietsch, "long a student of Jewish migration, who in 1897 suggested Cyprus as a Zionist objective near Palestine."

Herzl at one point considered storming Palestine from Cyprus to acquire the Holy Land "as it was once taken from us." 2

Herzl publicly urged Zionists to prepare for that day when Palestine was in the offing:

"... our propaganda must be carried on unceasingly, and the material means must be accumulated. The more capable our movement becomes of action, the sooner and the more certainly shall we reach our goal."

Herzl, however, never fully appreciated the extent and nature of the Sultan's opposition to Zionism. The prolonged discussions with Turkey gave encouragement to Herzl in the belief that his quest for Palestine was not a waste of time, and his actions in trying to strengthen his own bargaining position vis-à-vis the Sultan reflect this belief. The determined and ultimately frustrating effort to find the key lever to compel the Sultan to alter his decision guided Herzl's actions during the last two years of his life and probably contributed to his premature death in 1904 at the age of 44.

For a time Herzl believed that merely the threat of Zionist settlement in some other area would make the Sultan relic for fear that the Ottoman Empire would be denied the preferred financial resources which would attend any Jewish settlement. Even before Herzl turned seriously to negotiate with the British, he re-addressed himself to Turkey, holding out the possibility that the Jewish people might settle and invest elsewhere should Palestine be closed to them. 4

It is significant in terms of Herzl's steadfast attachment to the Palestine objective (a source of great controversy in intra-Zionist politics) that he never considered any other Jewish settlement as a substitute for Palestine. Other proposed settlements were viewed principally as bargaining and threatening levers directed at Palestine. In fact, during negotiations with the British over Sinai and East Africa, Herzl not only refused to break off discussions with Turkey, but made other negotiations, especially those with the British, the occasion for diplomatic initiatives calculated to exploit the fact of these alternatives in the eyes of the Sultan. 5

Herzl's plan did not preclude less pacific designs. Ultimately he came to believe that the answer lay in the formation of a "Jewish Eastern Company" with settlements in Cyprus, al-'Arish and Sinai which would compel the Sultan "to be on good terms" with him. During the summer of 1902 he wrote:

"Some day — when they [the Turks] are dans la déche [reduced to begging] ... they will suddenly send for me in their need, and throw the thing in my lap. The only question is when that moment will come. I believe that I can greatly expedite it if I manage with the help of Lord Rothschild or the English government, to create the Jewish Eastern Company.

"This must be my next task now. Then I would be

Theodor Herzl

a serious but friendly neighbour to the sanjak of Jerusalem, which I shall somehow acquire at the first opportunity, as the Bulgarians did with Eastern Rumelia."

Herzl's interview with Joseph Chamberlain

It was logical for Herzl to turn to the country which controlled the destinies of Cyprus and Sinai—Britain. In the first of his historic meetings with British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, in October 1902, Herzl revealed the essence of the attraction of Sinai:

"... to induce the Turks to come to terms with me if I also turned up at the brink of Egypt ... to obtain a rallying point for the Jewish people at the vicinity of Palestine."

The popular imperialist, Chamberlain, had earned the reputation of being friendly to the Zionist cause by having gone on record publicly as believing the Jewish question was susceptible of a rational solution. 6

Chamberlain easily comprehended Herzl's objectives and admired his boldness and initiative. He, however, threw cold water on the Cyprus project (the one part of Herzl's territorial objective which, as Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain was in a position directly to assist with). The Colonial Secretary pointed to the factional quarrel between Greek and Turk on the island and what he termed a "trades-union" problem which would be created by an influx of Jewish

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3 Ibid., p. 393.
5 See e.g., Diaries, pp. 1411 and ff.; 1574-5.
6 Diaries, p. 1344.
7 Diaries, p. 1362.
8 Bein, op. cit. p. 417.
immigrants as "if Cyprus were discussed in this way," Chamberlain warned, "a storm would break lose immediately". The Colonial Secretary, however, liked the Zionist idea and offered to help regarding Sinai. 9

It was Chamberlain who next arranged Herzl’s first interview with Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne and coached the Zionist leader in the presentation of his case for al-Arish and Sinai. Chamberlain was firm in his insistence that Herzl conceal his offensive designs towards the Sultan as the object of the Sinai stratagem:

"Tell him, in particular," Chamberlain urged, "that your proposed colony is not a jumping-off place aimed at the Sultan’s possessions."

Herzl recorded:

"I said: ‘Of course there can be no question of that, for I intend to go to Palestine only with the Sultan’s consent.’

‘He gave me an amused look, as if to say: ‘Go tell that to the Sultan.’

‘But aloud he said to me: ‘Reassure Lord Lansdowne that you are not planning a Jameson raid from El Arish into Palestine.’

‘– I shall set his mind at rest, Mr. Chamberlain,’ I said, also smiling.‘"

Herzl proposes the formation of a chartered Jewish company in Cyprus to save England from an influx of Eastern European Jews!

The advantages which Zionism appeared to bring to any diplomatic arrangement arose from Herzl’s claim, through his position as President of the World Zionist Organization, to represent (with the potential to activate and direct) "the Jewish people" dispersed throughout the world. It was ironic that Herzl (and Weizmann too, some years later) should have projected this claim in negotiations with various governments, since the reality was that Herzl, to a great extent, sought major-power support to enhance Zionist influence among those (Jews included) who opposed Zionism’s objectives. Herzl, for example, aimed to have the British government induce its own citizens of Jewish faith to "collaborate" with him. 11

Without this claim of power over "the Jewish people", Herzl would have been in a weak bargaining position, dependent entirely on the goodwill of one or more of the major powers.

The then current debate over possible restriction of alien immigration to Britain (which ultimately led to passage of the aliens Bill of 1905) provided Herzl with the opportunity to brandish his one major weapon.

Herzl believed he could exploit tension over the public debate on restricting immigration by providing the English with an "out" in the form of diverting the mass of Jews fleeing Eastern Europe to some legally secured home.

"By giving evidence before the Royal Commission whose perplexity caused by the horns of a dilemma I want to bring about: either a break with the glorious principle of free asylum, or leaving the native working class unprotected. My way out if they ask for it—is the creation of a chartered company in Cyprus." 12

Lord Rothschild confronted Herzl with the rumour going about that the Zionist leader had been invited to testify before the Royal Commission to support proposals for restriction. Proponents could claim:

"Dr. Herzl is certainly the exemplary Jew and he declared that a Jew can never become an Englishman." [This was the logical basis of the Zionist position.]

Herzl countered by suggesting that English Jews, instead, should erect a "monument out of gratitude, because I saved them from an influx of East European Jews and thus from anti-Semitism." Later he warned Rothschild:

"Your situation, Milord, is quite different. today at any rate, before anti-Semitism has prevailed in England. Today you still have elbow room." 14

To the Royal Commission, Herzl put the Zionist solution to the problem:

"The Jews of Eastern Europe cannot stay where they are—where are they to go? If you find they are wanted here, then some place must be found to which they can migrate without raising the problems that confront them here. Those problems will not arise if a home be found for them which will be legally recognized as Jewish." 15

Ever responsive to the realities of diplomacy, Herzl always attempted to lead from strength and advantage. In securing his first interview with Chamberlain, he introduced himself as "the recognized leader of the Zionist movement in all countries . . . [with] . . . a comprehensive view of Jewish migration of the present and immediate future . . . [and] . . . also of influencing it somewhat." 16 Chamberlain did not hesitate in rising to the bait. He warned Herzl that restrictive legislation might follow if Jewish immigration did not abate. Herzl, satisfied by Chamberlain’s reaction, noted mentally: " . . . this evidently was a hint to me, the gipsy chieflain, to call off my hordes . . . " 17

Herzl contrived to appear as not only providing the British with a solution to their problem of immigration but, as well, the means of converting that problem into an advantage. Herzl, too, sensed the admixture of idealism and Realpolitik which characterized so much of British official attitude towards Zionism, and while he could vary and adjust his appeal to these major springs of motivation, Herzl’s action nevertheless indicates his belief that in the final analysis success would depend on practical and tangible elements—advantages incorporated in some quid pro quo arrangement.

Herzl submits to the British Government his document demanding Jewish statehood in Sinai, to be run by Jewish Eastern Company to be formed for the purpose.

There followed the first “serious political document” demanding “Jewish statehood” ever “submitted to a government as a practical measure.” 18

Herzl’s case—presented to Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, and the Government officials responsible for British affairs in Egypt and the Sinai, was anchored to practical, immediate advantages to Britain. “My proposition,”

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9 Diaries, pp. 1360-62.
10 Diaries, p. 1309.
11 Diaries, p. 1304.
12 Diaries, p. 1284.
13 Diaries, pp. 1292-93.
14 Diaries, p. 1309.
15 Bein, op. cit., p. 387.
16 Diaries, p. 1354.
17 Diaries, p. 1361.
18 Bein, op. cit., p. 423
he wrote, “will tend to solve the Jewish question of Eastern Europe in a manner that, while reflecting fresh honours upon England, may also benefit her materially.”

The existence of a Royal Commission on Alien Immigration was Herzl’s “warrant for suggesting that the British Government should assist to open up a territory for the Jews who, oppressed almost everywhere else, gravitate on that very account to England”.

Public opinion which Herzl described as presently and “distinctively averse to further immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe” would be met, and a “worthless and almost uninhabited” Sinai “could be made by the influence of England, a place of refuge, a home for oppressed Jews, if England will favour the establishment of a Jewish colony such as I have referred to”.

With an eye to the practical, Herzl emphasized that the great support for Zionism is because “the charitable idea” is avoided, unlike other Jewish settlement schemes. Here, Herzl was hoping to avoid the potential obstacle presented by the recollection of a previous and unsuccessful attempt at Jewish settlement in Sinai some years before.

The listing of some practical features of his scheme provided Herzl with the opportunity to project himself as leader of an organization capable of directing masses of Jews throughout the world.

Once “the necessary territorial concession” was obtained the “Jewish Eastern Company” would be formed and “colonization on a regular system” would follow.

There would be no restrained rush, immigration “would be carefully organized...[by] thousands of Zionist Associations spread throughout the world...united in each country into local Federations...now centralized.” Every “branch Society” was a potential “Emigration Bureau with absolute reliance and unity of system.” The “local bodies” would select immigrants and be responsible for their “suitability.” This would “insure a sound ground/stock of pioneers.” The “most modern principles” would be applied to the utilization of the capital and the select “pioneers.”

Herzl followed Chamberlain’s suggestion by assuring the Foreign Secretary that:

“. . . there need not be a shadow of doubt as to the absolute peaceableness of the proposed settlement in the Sinai Peninsula and El Arish, if permission were granted...”

In Herzl’s original draft proposal to Lansdowne composed (24 October 1901) shortly after his first interview with the Foreign Secretary, the Zionist president committed to paper the essence of what he, no doubt, believed would strike a responsive chord with the British. After consultation with a number of his colleagues, it was decided not to include some of Herzl’s original ideas which perhaps were considered inappropriate and a distraction from his immediate practical proposals to meet the urgent immigration problem.

Herzl nevertheless was convinced that the solution to the greater “Jewish question” was “the concern of both domestic and foreign policy”. He hoped at this time to implant the seed generally which had taken eager root in the mind of Joseph Chamberlain.

Herzl believed that England could “make an enormous [spiritual] acquisition of human beings”, which he termed “the wealth of a country”. Not only Zionist settlers “with their capital and labour” but “all other Jews in the world, too, will come into England’s fold at one stroke—if not politically, then at least morally.”

Bismarck had appreciated this. Ten million Jews throughout the world would “wear England in their hearts...ten million secret but loyal subjects active in all walks of life”. There would be some sellers of “needles and thread” but also “wholesale merchants, industrialists, stockbrokers, scholars and artists and newspapermen”. As at a signal, all of them will place themselves at the service of the magnanimous nation that brings long-desired help.

Herzl offered England “ten million agents for her greatness and her influence...from the political to the economic” to “purchase and propagate the products” of England. And England’s colonies would “expand” and be fortified through the acquired asset.

“May the English government recognize what value there is in gaining the Jewish people.”

Herzl’s political Zionism envisaged a Jewish settlement with full sovereign rights in Palestine

Herzl’s “political Zionism” envisaged a Jewish settlement with full sovereign rights in Palestine when the time came and especially in the preliminary settlements to provide the means to obtain Palestine. In Herzl’s view Zionism constituted a comprehensive and radical approach to the solution of the Jewish question requiring control over the destiny of “the Jewish people”. The objective was not simply a place of refuge dependent on the sufferance of others. The Basle Programme mentioned “a home in Palestine secured by public law”. Herzl conceived of a “state” rather than a “home” which was inserted to placate those who objected to the political-national nature of the Zionist movement.

Herzl himself at the time remarked:

“No need to worry about use of the term ‘home’.
The people will read it as ‘Jewish State’ anyhow.”

While there were objectives both in addition to and in place of sovereign attributes (e.g. some Zionists were cultural-spiritual advocates Herzl’s conception translated into his diplomatic efforts indicates that he sought the fact of a Jewish state, even if for judicious reasons the term was to be avoided in discussion.

“The Chartered Company” concept. Herzl knew that the British Empire had been built up not by soldiers, but by trading companies.

This most unique situation which Herzl faced, demanding not merely the mobilization of a nation scattered throughout the world but the possession of land for settlement, required some instrument capable of transforming present

19 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp. 101-114 (12 Nov. 1902), Herzl to Lansdowne.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Diaries, p. 367.
23 See The Jewish State, passim.
26 Diaries, p. 1372.
realities into the realization of Zionism's objective. For this, Herzl seized upon the "Chartered Company" concept.

By the time Herzl set his pen to write *The Jewish State*, the Chartered Company concept had matured as a very useful possibility of Zionist policy.27

One of the facets of Zionist attachment to the British emerged through appreciation of the growth of the Empire. The Jews were aware of the fact that not by soldiers did the great British Empire been built up, but by trading companies: India by the East India Company, Canada by the Hudson Bay Fur Company, South Africa by mining companies. The East India Company was incorporated in 1600; a few years later (1607) the earliest permanent settlement was founded. The Pilgrim Fathers — a movement somewhat similar to Zionism — began their noble works in 1620. West Indian colonization was inaugurated with the occupation of the Barbados in North America, and colony after colony was added to the British Crown. Then other regions began to attract the British, and a new era dawned with the occupation of Gibraltar in 1704.

All the great achievements of British peaceful conquests encouraged the Zionist Movement with its trusts and funds. Cecil Rhodes, with only a million pounds to start with, created Rhodesia with its 750,000 square miles. The British East Africa Company, which administered 200,000 square miles, began with the same amount as the Jewish Colonial Trust, namely, £250,000.28

Hobson's classical study of imperialism appeared in the very year of Herzl's diplomatic moves.29

The above account bears a striking resemblance to passages in Hobson's classic critical study of imperialism first published in the very year of Herzl's diplomatic initiatives with the British.30 Hobson noted that the trading companies had led the way in the "first organized contact with the lower races"; that "rights of government were accorded by charter as incidental to the main purpose" of trading.31

But out of commercial beginnings of settlement, of necessity, political institutions and control emerged. Chartered companies were "permitted to exercise arbitrary powers of government over native populations under the imperfect check of some British Imperial Commissioner."32 It is hardly surprising that Zionists (Herzl in particular), in quest of the legally secured home with sovereign rights, were attracted to the Chartered Company idea.

Hobson described how capital investment, and manpower organization, had come to play a more important role, altering the trading nature of the companies "to the control and development of agricultural and mining resources . . . to supply Western markets.

"In most parts of the world a purely or distinctly commercial routine and conduct have furnished the nucleus out of which Imperialism has grown, the early trading settlement with land and mineral concessions growing round it, an industrial settlement involving force, for protection, for securing further concessions, and for checking or punishing infringement of agreement or breaches of order; other interests, political and religious, enter in more largely, the original commercial settlement assumes a stronger political and military character, the reins of government are commonly taken over by the State from the company and a vaguely defined protectorate passes gradually into the form of a colony. Sierra Leone, Uganda, and at no distant date, Rhodesia, will serve for recent instances of this evolution."33

Could a Jewish state emerge from a similar effort — say in Sinai?

Moreover, a Chartered Company structure would not only provide the venture with a businesslike appearance (where the major objective was in fact political) but would supply added resources, manpower and financial, at a crisis-point in the life-cycle of the British Empire when prospective further expansion was effectively being challenged by the economy-minded:

"Only at the turn of the century, with the South African war, did the price in men and resources begin to seem high. Then, after an almost frenzied imperialism, the expansionist spirit declined and consolidation became the order of the day."34

**Herz and Rothschild**

Early in the negotiations, Herzl was determined to associate with the British branch of the House of Rothschild in the project. He was convinced that the Jews would have to supply all the funds, as they could expect no money from the British.35 Herzl did not hide (especially from the British) the fact that Lord Rothschild supported the proposals. The name of Rothschild attached to the scheme would be a great asset, to judge from this example of the then current reputation of the family:

"Does anyone seriously suppose that a great war could be undertaken by any European state or a great state loan subscribed, if the House of Rothschild and its connections set their face against it?" Every great political act involving a new flow of capital, or a large fluctuation in the value of existing investments, must receive the sanction and the practical aid of this little group of financial kings."36

Rothschild not only would provide the respectable front but assist too in the matter of acquiring the necessary financial backing. Herzl was particularly interested in obtaining the support and securing the resources of the Jewish Colonization Association, and Rothschild offered entrée into this group.

As the objective of all these moves ultimately was to bring pressure on the Sultan to surrender Palestine, Herzl suggested, as well, that Rothschild could assist by doing what he could to prevent the Sultan from obtaining the much sought-after international financing.37

In discussing Herzl's plan, Rothschild advised against using the term "charter" even though the concept was tenable.

Herzl replied: "We can call it whatever you like. I

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27 See the numerous references in *The Jewish State*, passim.
30 Hobson, op. cit., p. 215.
31 Ibid., p. 116.
32 Ibid., p. 252.
34 Diaries, p. 1295.
35 Hobson, op. cit., p. 57.
36 Diaries, p. 1294.
want to found a Jewish Colony in a British possession." 37
But Herzl kept from Rothschild his objectives with respect to
sovereignty.

"I didn't go into details regarding the possible
constitution of the Jewish colony, I merely said that it
ought to be made attractive so that not only beggars
would come there." 38

It was in the name of making the proposed colony
"attractive" to the potential settlers that Herzl hoped to
obtain the sovereign objectives which would provide for
"political" Zionism a kind of fundamental security. Once
some form of recognition of sovereign rights was accorded
the key nucleus would be assured. So fundamental was
Herzl's quest for "political assurances" that he declined an
offer by the Sultan of settlement in Mesopotamia because
of the lack of these prospects. 39

The proposals to Lansdowne indicated that Herzl's
scheme would differ from the "artificiality" and "insignificance"
of previous colonizing attempts.

"Its greatness and future promise lie in the guaran-
teeing of Colonial Rights. Here lies the powerful attrac-
tion of the Jewish people. It is not merely the Jews of
Eastern Europe in search of work that would migrate
thither. People with capital at their disposal would also
establish enterprises in a land where they could be
certain to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

"From Russia and the East of Europe indeed
some of the richest Jews would join in the migration—
I speak here from precise and personal knowledge. We
should endeavour to work for what I may term the
self-development of the Colony from within rather than
the adoption of extraneous means for its advancement." 40

Egypt's suzerainty over Sinai and Herzl's moves

Herzl originally had been warned by Chamberlain that,
as regards Sinai, the British government decision might well
depend on the reaction of Lord Cromer in Cairo. 41 It
occasioned no surprise, then, when Lord Lansdowne informed
the Zionist leader that, indeed, Cromer would have to be
consulted. 42 Cromer, in fact, was not only the key individual
behind British policy in Egypt, virtually he was ruler of that
state.

The constitutional pattern of Egypt's rule was based
upon "The Organic Law of 1883" with nominal authority
vested in the Khedive, a council of ministers, a Legislative
Council and a General Assembly—"the visible government"

"But the real government was a more or less
invisible system of British 'advisers' supervising and
controlling every department of the administration, and
taking their orders not from the Khedive but from the
British Consul-General at Cairo. As British Consul-
General and High Commissioner, Lord Cromer was the
real monarch of Egypt for a quarter-century, from 1883
to 1907." 43

The results of his first meeting with Lansdowne
appeared satisfactory to Herzl. He dispatched a colleague,
Leopold Greenberg, to Cairo with a note of introduction
from the Foreign Secretary to Cromer. Unknown to Herzl,
Lansdowne had indicated in the missive that while it "was
impossible to express any opinion as to the merits of the
scheme", to him "it seemed very visionary". 44 Herzl,
however, appeared unduly optimistic.

"Is it possible [he recorded] that we stand on the
threshold of obtaining a British charter and founding
the Jewish State?" 45

Less than a week later he received word from Cairo
that Cromer and the Egyptian Prime Minister had been
"won over to our cause". It was on the basis of this infor-
mation and in the glow of the optimism generated that
Herzl and colleagues drafted the formal memorandum of
proposals to Lansdowne (dated 12 November 1902).

So confident was Herzl that he indulged in sketching a
form of outline development plan for a new harbour above
al-'Arish as part of "the initial economic basis for a great
settlement in the mountains." 46

Unknown to Herzl, almost from the moment the Foreign
Office was in receipt of his proposals events seriously began
to turn against him. The Permanent Under-Secretary
immediately reacted to Herzl's sovereignty gambit:

"I do not understand what is meant on page 4 by
the guaranteeing of colonial rights." 47

Nevertheless, as was intended, the Herzl Memorandum
went forward for Cromer's comment. In answer Cromer
came quickly to the point. He first established that it was
"somewhat difficult to believe that the Zionist movement
will really find much favour in the eyes of the Sultan," 48
With one stroke Cromer seemed to be cutting the ground
away from the basis of Herzl's avowed strategic objective.
The Zionist president had more than just implied that,
whereas al-'Arish and Sinai might meet an immediate
Zionist (and British) need (concealing, of course, the more
aggressive aspects of his stratagem towards the Sultan),
nevertheless, despite the long drawn-out and thus far
unfruitful negotiations he had pursued with the Turkish
officials, he would persevere with these discussions in the
hope of success with the Sultan, who, Herzl claimed, was
"personally well-disposed towards him." 49

There was too in Cromer's reaction evidence of judg-
ment and anticipation which, at least in so far as the Turkish
role in the Sinai story was concerned, was to prove accurate:
having successfully countered Herzl's direct approach to
secure a charter for Palestine while at the same time resist-
ing the influx of Jewish immigrants, it was not surprising that
Turkish officials, when the opportunity arose, should oppose
the establishment of a Zionist settlement in the Ottoman
Empire at the door to Palestine.

Herzl was not oblivious to the Turkish aspect of the
Sinai question. He was prepared, for example, to limit to
some extent his territorial demands to avoid the knotty

37 Ibid.
38 Diaries, p. 1296
39 Diaries, p. 1303.
40 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp. 110-114 (Nov. 12, 1902) Herzl to Lans-
downe.
41 Diaries, p. 1362.
42 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp. 100-114 (Nov. 12, 1902) Herzl to Lans-
downe.
43 Moon, P. T. Imperialism and World Politics (New York, The
44 P.R.O. F.O. 800/123 (Lansdowne's Private Press) 221 (Oct. 24,
1902), Lansdowne (F.O.) to Cromer (Cairo).
45 Diaries, p. 1372.
46 Diaries, p. 1377.
47 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp. 115-116 (Nov. 11, 1902) Minute by Sir
Thomas Sanderson.
48 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 No. 164 (Nov. 29, 1902) p. 119. Cromer
(Cairo) to Lansdowne (F.O.).
49 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, p. 112 (Nov. 12, 1902) Herzl to Lansdowne.
problem of the disputed boundary between Egyptian Sinai and Turkish Palestine.\textsuperscript{50}

But he believed the tripartite stake was an advantage:

"On the Sinai Peninsula the situation is confused in a way favourable to us. I must differentiate: possession, power and right.

"The Egyptian government has possession, the English government has the power, the Turkish government has the right.

"First I shall have possession assigned to me by the Egyptian government, then I shall demand from the English government as much power as possible, and, finally, I shall acquire the right to go with it from the Turkish government by means of bakhsheesh (‘hand-out’)."\textsuperscript{51}

Lord Cromer and the Jewish colonization of Sinai

Cromer informed the Foreign Office that in principle he could "see no political objection to the establishment of such a colony [as proposed by Herzl] provided that due attention is paid to certain conditions . . . " Cromer suggested that inasmuch as the frontier between al-'Arish and the head of the Gulf of Akaba was still hotly contested between the Turkish and Egyptian governments, "the Colony if it is founded at all" should be sited west of the disputed area:

"It may be predicted with tolerable certainty that the colonists will fare better at the hands of the Egyptians than at those of the Turkish authorities."

Cromer's second point was concerned with the economic feasibility of the proposed project. He proposed inter alia that a Commission be sent out to decide as to the feasibility and promise of success of the scheme.

Finally, Cromer turned to what he described as "... perhaps in the present stage of the proceedings the most important of all considerations."

Here Cromer echoed Sanderson's reaction to Herzl's request for the "guaranteeing of colonial rights" as the basis for the "greatness and future promise" of the settlement. Cromer was unsure of what the implications were of these words, "or what would be the nature of the rights claimed by Dr. Herzl on behalf of the colonists". It was "most necessary" to establish an "explicit understanding" on the subject: "before going any further" Herzl should explain "more fully" what is intended here.

Nevertheless, Cromer outlined the probable Egyptian position on this: There would be no special rights. It was essential that the colonists be "subject to Egyptian law" with no rights "beyond those enjoyed by all other inhabitants of the country who are Ottoman subjects". Perhaps these conditions "may lead to difficulties of a nature calculated to threaten the further development of the project" (as Herzl conceived it), but extra-territorial privileges would be ruled out. "The Egyptian Government would, very naturally . . . demur to the creation of a colony of this nature, which would almost certainly cause much future trouble". Cromer continued: "... unless this point can be satisfactorily settled, the project is not one which should receive any encouragement from His Majesty's Government."

In Cromer's view the "only solution possible" was for the colonists to "renounce their foreign nationalities and become Ottoman subjects". To dispel any doubt "their governments should be made parties to the agreement" by renouncing any rights or claims over them. If the colonists were not to be "wholly governed by Egyptian law", Cromer advised that the project not "be entertained".\textsuperscript{52}

Herzl was undaunted by Cromer's reaction (which was formally relayed by Sanderson at the Foreign Office). The Zionist leader termed it "an historic document" and chose to interpret the substance as evidence of the feasibility of the project subject to the report of the Commission to be sent out.\textsuperscript{53} His reaction to the demand that colonists become Ottoman subjects:

"I shall charge the Sultan dearly for accepting Ottoman citizenship (under an English guarantee). I shall demand in return a piece of Palestine."

Meanwhile the colonists would elect their own governor—"to be confirmed by the Khedive, a Jewish Army would be built up, commanded by Anglo-Egyptian officers."\textsuperscript{54}

Herzl believed that in these preliminary discussions he had achieved sufficient success to warrant not only optimism but implementation of the next stage of his plan.

"On the basis of these accomplishments, Lord Rothschild will have to get me the J.C.A. [Jewish Colonization Association] money—at least two or three million pounds for the Jewish Eastern Company. The rest through public subscription."\textsuperscript{55,56}

As if by Providence, external factors were perceived by Herzl to move in his direction:

"... now that things are clacking east and west of the Mediterranean, now that the Mediterranean question will probably be opened up in the Spring, the partition of Morocco may be imminent, and the annexation of Tripoli is definitely in the offing, it is of the greatest importance that I speak with Lansdowne. With Rothschild as well."\textsuperscript{57}

The formation of the British Commission on Sinai

In his eagerness to capitalize on the apparent favourable turn of events, Herzl chose merely to acknowledge Sanderson's letter but neglected to comment substantially on the points raised by Cromer.\textsuperscript{58} Instead, arrangements were undertaken to form the Commission of Sinai. When Cromer received news of this he cabled the Foreign Office:

"Before any Commission comes, I think satisfactory assurances should be received as regards points raised in the last part of your [Sanderson/Lansdowne] letter."\textsuperscript{59}

By the time Lansdowne enforced Cromer's "request" Herzl had prepared a more detailed answer which he dispatched to the Foreign Secretary early in the new year.

While agreeing with Cromer's suggestion about the composition of the Commission, Herzl proceeded to "hedge his bets" against the possibility of a negative report to emerge. In effect, he asked Lansdowne to disregard "the opinion of experts, however unfavourable it may be," since

\textsuperscript{50} P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp 139-141 (January 6, 1903) Herzl to Lansdowne.

\textsuperscript{51} Diaries, p. 1432.

\textsuperscript{52} P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 164 (Nov. 29, 1902) pp. 119-121, Cromer (Cairo) to Lansdowne (F.O.).

\textsuperscript{53} Diaries, p. 1381.

\textsuperscript{54} Diaries, pp. 1382-83.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Diaries, p. 1384.

\textsuperscript{57} P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 (Dec. 26, 1902) Herzl to Lansdowne.

\textsuperscript{58} P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, p 134 (Jan. 2, 1903) Cromer (Cairo) to Lansdowne (F.O.).
Herzl influences the opinion of the Commission by instructing his colleague and a Zionist South African that the “report” must indicate the feasibility of a Jewish settlement in Sinai.

The initiative still seemed to rest with Herzl. He quickly followed up his interview with Sanderson by instructing his colleague, the South African Zionist engineer, Leopold Kessler, who was appointed director of the Commission, that the report “must” indicate “the feasibility of settling the land” for Herzl to obtain the charter. Feasibility, to Herzl’s way of thinking, was dependent not merely on natural resources but on the potential of money and manpower. Herzl, as well, had exacted from the Commission members as a “condition for participation in the expedition” the promise not to reveal or publish anything without first obtaining his permission.

Determined as Herzl was to obtain the requisite foothold, Greenberg in Cairo was instructed to “ask for as much as possible” but if necessary “to take what he can from the English government.” The charter should be “concise and flexible.” Herzl now turned to his strategic objective. On the basis of the fact of negotiations with Britain, Herzl sought to reduce the intransigence of the Sultan. To the Grand Vivier he revealed:

“...we are at an advanced stage of very serious negotiations with a government to obtain a colonial concession in an African country.”

Herzl inveigles the Sultan of Turkey and offers bribes to obstructionists of the Khedivial Court

Herzl now offered “financial assistance” to the Sultan in return for acceptance of the same proposals he had made to the Egyptians:

“You will grant us the right of colonization for our persecuted people, who will become Ottoman subjects, as the colony will of course remain under the sovereignty of H.I.M. the Sultan.”

At the same time he wrote direct to the Sultan offering a loan of two million Turkish pounds for the Imperial treasury in return “for a concession to colonize a part of the Galilee...” The Zionist leader promised that:

“...spread by newspapers to the four corners of the earth, the news would produce, outside of the immediate financial result, a current of friendship for the Turks among the Jews of the entire world, one that would grow from day to day, and in these perhaps difficult times, the Ottoman Empire could count on unfailing gratitude.”

Herzl capped this diplomatic flurry by sending further missives to a number of the Sultan’s advisers.

Ironically, on the very date (16 February 1903) when Herzl dispatched these communications he received word from Cairo:

“Have private information from Cromer that Cohn’s [Sultan’s] man here is doing all he can to oppose us. It is very serious. He is acting in conformity with

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59 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 pp. 139-141 (Jan. 6, 1903) Herzl to Lansdowne.
60 Diaries, p. 1388.
61 Diaries, p. 1401.
62 Bein, op. cit., p. 428.
63 Diaries, p. 1394.
64 Diaries, p. 1412.
65 Diaries, p. 1414.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS

32
instructions from the Sultan. Do not forget Khedive is subject to Sultan.”

Herzl’s reaction was to cable Greenberg to offer the obstructionist Turk a bribe of £2,000 to be handed over after the charter was signed by the Egyptian authorities.66

The Egyptian government rejects the granting of a charter to the Jewish National Settlement Company

The follow-up cable from Greenberg brought worse news—“impossible to obtain a charter from the Khedive.” An “alternative proposal” was under consideration by the Egyptian government.67

Herzl subsequently learned that the basis upon which the Egyptians rejected the proposal for a charter was the very same for which Herzl was willing to go to almost any lengths to achieve it, namely, the sovereign elements and further potential contained therein. The Khedive made clear when offering his own substitute that he had given consideration to Herzl’s “proposals to obtain for a Jewish National Settlement Company a charter with a view to establishing a Jewish colony in the Sinai Peninsula.” The Egyptians pointed out, however, that

“According to the Imperial Firman, the Khedive is unable through one proviso or another to abandon wholly or in part, any rights inherent in its sovereign authority (italics added). Consequently all idea of a concession by charter should be formally abandoned.”

Instead, should the Colonization Company base itself according to Egyptian Law a concession would be considered. The Egyptian offer, in effect, constituted a concession without charter—without sovereign rights. And the concession would be based upon “the express acceptance of...[certain]...points which constitute an essential condition.”

(1) The colonists “should be local subjects”. Those settlers “who are not Ottoman subjects” must affirm “in writing” acceptance of “the exclusive jurisdiction of the indigenous” judicial and administrative officials. “Authorities of the country of origin” would renounce, in writing, all rights and claims over the settler and attest “to his right to acquire Ottoman nationality.”

(2) The concession would explicitly state “that the settlers would be entirely and forever under the laws and regulations” which apply. Suitable exception would be made for “question of personal status” arising from recognition of “religious authorities...under the same conditions which exist for the other non-Muslim communities in Egypt.” These religious authorities to be “formally recognized by the Government.”

(3) The wishes of the settlers would be considered in the selection of local officials, judges, etc.

(4) The government would be prepared, consistent with the above, and where possible, to grant local rights.68

It is not surprising that Herzl considered that “it hardly represented any gain” and that it consisted “of hypothetical promises and very definite restrictions. The granting of a charter [was] flatly refused.”69

Significantly, the only bright spot for Herzl was the statement which implied that non-Ottoman settlers need not become Ottoman subjects—the demand being that they merely “accept the exclusive jurisdiction of the indigenous authorities in matters of administration and of the judiciary.” Here Herzl saw “a valuable thing” even if it was provided by implication. That he should find some advantage in this is further indication of the kind of rights he was seeking.67 Both Herzl and Greenberg believed that Cromer was in favour of the Zionist proposals “but that Egyptians opposed the charter out of deference to H.M. the Sultan.”72

There is more than just a suggestion that Herzl was of the belief that Cromer welcomed strong London support for Zionism to offset Turkish pressure in Cairo on this matter. The Zionist leader saw advantages in this.

“The British government would feel itself more strongly bound to the Zionist policy, perhaps as a matter of honour, and if the project fell through, might not feel itself obligated to help the Zionists in some other way.”78

Despite his disappointment with the Egyptian counter-offer, Herzl wired Cairo: “Achieve whatever is possible.”74 For, as his biographer points out, Herzl treated the Egyptian offer as “only a beginning”—political negotiations were conducted in the Orient-like purchases in a bazaar.75

The Commission of Sinai report and Herzl’s manoeuvres

Events, too, were now bringing the matter to a head as the Commission turned to preparation of its report. Herzl journeyed to Cairo to be on the scene. Cromer proved of little comfort by encouraging Herzl to think in terms of a “concession” but that in the matter of “rights, the immigrants must have none different from those of the Egyptians”. When Herzl countered by expressing preference for some kind of British protection, Cromer deferred this by reassured him that whatever form the agreement took “would probably amount to the same thing”.76

Herzl now received the advance report of the Commission. He attempted unsuccessfully to suppress its very discouraging conclusion that “under existing conditions the country is quite unsuitable for settlers from European countries” but should water resources be made available the land would be capable of supporting substantial settlement.77

He nevertheless persevered and initiated discussions over the legal character of the proposed concession in an effort to use the terms promised by the Egyptian Government as the basis for negotiations with the aim of improving on them. To his lawyer Herzl confided: “We will give up the word ‘charter’ but not the thing itself.” Herzl recorded:

“I quoted to him what Talleyrand said when Napoleon was conferring with him and Siéyés about a Constitution. ‘Une constitution doit être courte et...”

66 Diaries, p. 1417.
67 Diaries, p. 1419.
68 P.R.O. F.O. 78,5479 (Feb. 22, 1903). Copy of letter from Egyptian Ministry of Foreign affairs to Greenberg: “...conditions on which the Egyptian Government would allow the establishment of the colony.”
69 Bein, op. cit., p. 431.
70 Diaries, p. 1428.
71 Diaries, p. 1428.
72 Diaries, p. 1434.
73 Bein, op. cit., p. 431.
74 Diaries, p. 1434.
75 Bein, op. cit., p. 431.
76 Diaries, p. 1446.
77 Bein, op. cit., p. 434.
Herzl, in fact, scarcely had room for manoeuvre. Opposition to a charter with sovereign objectives had been raised in London and Cairo. ‘To be frank was not rewarding. To spell out details was too revealing—fewer details would appear more harmless.’

Herzl would pursue a course designed to blur the issues, to promote calculated obscurity, and thus avoid obstacles. A flexible concession ignoring the question of sovereignty would not necessarily preclude the essential ingredients in the future—to get a foothold with such flexibility was the least. However, Herzl could afford to take and might be the most that was offered. But by this time it was difficult for Herzl to fool anyone. The British legal adviser to the Egyptian government understood what was at stake. He saw in Herzl’s proposal that which was tantamount to a charter with sovereign rights. Herzl recorded that the legal expert “grinned when he heard the charter tinkling out of the concession.” Further opposition was voiced to the idea of a contiguous settlement. “They are willing,” Herzl observed, “to give us plots all right, but no land.”

Ultimately, Herzl left Cairo convinced that the project was in jeopardy. He was prepared now to take the concession even without Nile water for the time being to salvage something. Cromer had refused to see Herzl before his departure from Cairo. Herzl had received instead a “cool letter of refusal, saying that modification would still have to be made . . . before it [draft proposal] could be accepted.”

The full report of the Commission was now ready and was dispatched to the Foreign Office. Sanderson noted: “To the un instructed mind this is a very depressing report.”

Much the same reaction was conveyed by Chamberlain when Herzl consulted with the Colonial Secretary on his return to London. Here, Herzl was unusually frank with the one British official in whom he had complete confidence. The Zionist leader spelled out why Sinai was so important:

“Our base must be in or near Palestine . . . we have to build on a national foundation, and this is why we must have the political attraction offered by El-Arish. But they don’t understand that in Egypt.”

The fact was that the Egyptians understood it all too clearly for Herzl’s comfort.

“There I was obliged to ask for a totally inadequate concession in view of the political situation and it only looks like a financial concession. As a land speculation it would be a bad deal. No one would give money. No one but ourselves—because we have underlying political motives” (italics added).

That Herzl should believe that the Egyptians and the Turks should not have, by then, understood this, is, to put it at its mildest, remarkable.

Much as he wished to help, Chamberlain could do little to alter the now inevitable course which the matter was taking. The Colonial Secretary agreed to ask Lansdowne if he could hurry Cromer towards a decision. Lansdowne appeared not to have his heart in the matter. Herzl recorded a “futile conversation” in his description of his next meeting with the Foreign Secretary. Lansdowne reported to Cromer that Herzl did want to press the matter to a decision despite the discouraging nature “in many respects” of the report of the Commission. Herzl still believed that he could command enough support in London to neutralize opposition in Cairo: “Go ahead all you can,” he cabled Goldsmid, his agent in Cairo, “you can rely upon Chamberlain. Lansdowne. Please hasten. (We) have British Government.”

But bad news ensued. The irrigation expert on the scene, Sir William Garstein, had come out against the project. Goldsmid cables: “Cromer recommends abandonment.” Herzl wired back desperately: “Take the best you can get.” Further words led Herzl reluctantly to conclude: “The end of a scheme.” “I believe that even Chamberlain can’t do anything further now.”

**Cromer decides against the Charter**

And indeed, as it happened, for Cromer the receipt of the report sealed his decision. He wrote to Lansdowne that the two possible plans “worthy of consideration” for supplying the necessary water for the settlement had been carefully considered and both had been found wanting. One plan would result in a temporary closure of the Suez Canal, while the alternative, involving the storage of rain water, was not one which the Egyptian Government was “prepared to entertain . . . as they do not consider that it contains any probable elements of success.” Cromer pointed out that “from the commencement of these negotiations . . . (he had) . . . in the face of a good deal of opposition, used every endeavour to obtain a fair hearing for Dr. Herzl and those acting with him.” Cromer was “now decidedly of the opinion that the matter should be dropped.” It could not be brought to fruition “without the exercise, on the part of His Majesty’s Government, of a far stronger pressure than the circumstances of the case would in any degree justify.”

The Egyptian opposition was “in no way due to anti-Jewish prejudice” but was based on two grounds. Firstly, the authorities, British and Egyptian, doubted “the possibility of success” and were “unwilling to be associated with failure.” Further, “what would involve a useless expenditure of great sums of money with the additional possibility of laying the foundation for “claims against the Egyptian Government.” The authorities “think, therefore, that it is not only the wisest, but also the most considerate plan to abstain from holding out to Dr. Herzl hopes which cannot be realized, and to state definitely that the negotiation is at an end.”

Having disposed of the technical details and the problems arising from them, Cromer now turned to the more politically sensitive area to which he had addressed himself previously. Cromer was worried about “the precise results if Dr. Herzl’s plan were carried into execution” for “a machine of government” in Egypt, which was “already one of the most com-

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78 Diaries, p. 1447.
79 Diaries, p. 1460.
80 Diaries, p. 1458.
81 Diaries, p. 1463.
82 Diaries, p. 1465.
83 Diaries, p. 1463.
84 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 No. 171 (April 23, 1903) Minute by Sir Thomas Sanderson.
85 Diaries, p. 1473.
86 Diaries, p. 2475.
87 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 190 (May 2, 1903) Lansdowne (F.O.) to Cromer (Cairo).
88 Diaries, p. 1480.
89 Diaries, pp. 1480-1.
90 Diaries, pp. 1485-6.
plicated in the world... so replete with anomalies and imperfections.” He “doubted that, whatever might be the conditions of settlement, if a large cosmopolitan society were allowed to settle in the Sinai Peninsula, for objects which are avowedly political and which are, to say the least, difficult to reconcile with interests of the Sultan, who is Suzerain of Egypt, the existing complications might not improbably be materially increased.”

(1) The attempt to exploit the indirect rule by Britain over the Egyptians and at the expense of the Khedive, to achieve a sovereignty in Sinai.

(2) The sovereign rights to Sinai to be used to further similar objectives in Palestine at the expense of the Sultan.

That Cromer should now rule out a settlement “whatever might be the conditions” is further indication that he understood what Herzl was driving at and was not prepared to make way for the thin edge of the wedge. Cromer, in his conclusion, noted that he urged Goldsmid “to allow the negotiations to drop altogether” and hoped “that similar language be used to Dr. Herzl should he, as is not improbable, apply to your Lordship.”

The following day, Cromer wrote privately to Lansdowne in a still more revealing manner. “But it is no good—the opposition is too strong and the case is manifestly not one on which we wished to bring all our authority to bear.” There was the fear that “they (the Jews) would almost certainly not stop in the Sinai Peninsula, but inundate Egypt.”

The significance of his previous remarks about the complicated machinery of government in Egypt and the true objective of the Zionist movement is more fully explained.

“Why,” am I asked, “should this further complication be added? They constitute a future imperium in imperio [state within a state] for this it is what it is sure to come to in some form or another.”

“Why should we deliberately make the Sultan a present of a grievance by encouraging the achievement of a body of colonists who say, almost in so many words, that they have the ultimate object to march to Palestine.”

Lansdowne, in turn, acknowledged to Cromer, privately, that he “was never sanguine as to the Jewish scheme.” The foreign secretary expressed the wish that “we could have got Herzl and Co. to cry off on their own accord—as it is we must I suppose snuff them out as gracefully as we can.”

Herzl did not let up. As soon as the Zionist leader was in possession of the full facts from Cairo, he wrote Lansdowne and challenged the decision on the technical grounds bound up with the supply of water. He challenged the conclusion of the Egyptian irrigation authorities as “open to question” and asserted that they had “denounced the scheme upon altogether insufficient evidence.”

Lansdowne answered Herzl with what at first glance appears as a re-statement of the points presented by Cromer in his official dispatch of May 14 (above), divided, as Cromer had done, into two parts: those points dealing with technical aspects and those with political implications. In the latter category Lansdowne repeats for Herzl the point about the added complications which would result from “the establishment of a large cosmopolitan society in the Sinai peninsula.” But the foreign secretary chose not to elaborate on this point as he might, had he included Cromer’s following phrases: “for objects which are avowedly political and which are, to say the least, difficult to reconcile with the interests of the Sultan, who is Suzerain of Egypt.”

Had Lansdowne done so, Herzl might then have been presented with the definitive argument to discourage further efforts for the project. As it was, the Zionist leader was informed that the foreign secretary believed nothing favourable could be expected by further reference to Cairo.

Thus ended the first phase of Herzl’s efforts to secure Sinai. The direct approach to Cairo with the help of London proved unsuccessful.

Herzl’s efforts were (and were perceived as) a political means to an end, not as an end in itself. The three essential parties, Britain, Egypt and Turkey, despite some half-hearted efforts at concealment, all understood what Herzl was driving at; and the objective was of such importance to all three that opposition by any single party would be likely to defeat the plan.

Conclusion

Herzl, it is true, had embarked upon the negotiations at some disadvantage. Behind him were direct negotiations with the Sultan and his ministers over a charter for Palestine. Scarcely weeks before the onset of serious talks with the British, the Turks, in spelling out their position on a Zionist charter, had repeatedly insisted that they would tolerate only “the settling of the Israelites in scattered form”—not in a concentrated or consolidated manner which was essential to an emerging sovereignty.

Despairing, Herzl had recorded: “Again the old childish claptap about the sujeton Ottomane (Ottoman citizenship)” It was not claptap to the Turks and ultimately proved of more than claptap significance to Herzl.

After his objective was denied through the front door, it is doubtful (no matter how innocent a front Herzl could have shown), that he could have avoided arousing the opposition of the Sultan, as Suzerain of Egypt, to Zionist plans for Sinai—in Egyptian Palestine, as Herzl and others called it—especially as the Turks had already been made sensitive to the issues involved by Herzl’s previous negotiations and the problems attendant on the influx at that time of Jewish nationalist immigration into the Ottoman Empire.

Was it merely coincidental that the terms of the tentative Egyptian offer of concession in Sinai (see above) should parallel and to a great extent duplicate the demands made by the Turks to the Zionists over Palestine and against which, in both cases, Herzl reacted strongly? The Turks, fearful of Jewish nationalism, offered “scattered” settlements, the Egyptians would give “plots” and both would go no further than granting local autonomy.

On top of this Herzl was hardly feckless in concealing his objectives despite Chamberlain’s warning. Cromer never-

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91 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479 No. 61 (May 14, 1903) Cromer (Cairo) to Lansdowne (F.O.).
92 P.R.O. F.O. 800/123, pp. 69 & ff. (May 15, 1903) Lansdowne Private Papers, Egypt file, Cromer (Cairo) to Lansdowne (F.O.).
93 P.R.O. F.O. 800/123, pp. 78 & 79 (May 23, 1903), Lansdowne Private Papers, Egypt file, Lansdowne (F.O.) to Cromer (Cairo).
94 P.R.O. F.O. 78/5479, pp. 202-3 (June 5, 1903) Herzl to Lansdowne.
95 P.R.O. F.O. 78/579, pp. 221-2 (June 19, 1903) Lansdowne to Herzl.
96 Dairries, p. 1339.
theless came to know what was at stake and so did Lansdowne; and Herzl's pertinacity and contrivances, extending to attempts at first "cooking" and, when this failed, at suppressing, the Report of the Commission were not calculated to allay suspicion. The final desperate effort to achieve "any basis" for settlement, coming after the spate of Herzl manoeuvres, would not be acceptable, come what might.

From the beginning, it was apparent that Cromer's judgment would be decisive. Cromer, who began with suspicion about the project, had these doubts confirmed as the details were spelt out. As the responsible official on the Egyptian scene who would have to deal with the day-to-day problems, it is not surprising that he should anticipate pitfalls and dangers. Cromer, at the very least, must go down in the history of Anglo-Zionist relations as the first British official to base a policy decision in part on fear of the dangers inherent in a tripartite governing relationship upon which Zionist hopes rested as a prelude to achieving their ultimate objectives.

Cromer did not welcome the prospect of "holding the ring" between Egyptian and Jewish nationalists and there is no evidence to suggest he was unhappy at the presence of unsound technical factors to provide him with a tangible basis for opposing the scheme. Herzl, himself, came to believe that the technical problems "had only been brought forward as a pretext."

97 Herzl too was impressed by "the striking number of intelligent-looking young Egyptians" who were "the coming masters." Diaries, p. 1449.
98 Ben, op. cit., p. 442.

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**FAR HAVE I WANDERED**

*(Jamal al-Din Afghani Speaks)*

Far have I wandered, through many lands,
Seeking to loosen the prisoners’ bands,
Seeking man’s justice with unjust men.
And failing, yet seeking ever again.
Seeking unity where there is strife.
Seeking peace as the crown of life.
Seeking truth in the midst of lies.
Seeking beauty aloft in the skies.
In the sunrise light and the drifting cloud
And the noonday calm and the nightly shroud.

Much have I loved on this planet of Earth,
The adventure that starts at the gates of birth.
The toss of waves in a ship at sea,
And the hope of a Kingdom yet to be.
The joy of learning, where learning is light.
The joy of seeking a greater height.
Of climbing up to the portals of day
When we have done with mortal clay.
But of all the beauty, from star to cloid.
The greatest, far, is to know Thee, God. Norman Lewis.

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"What! do they not then ponder on the Qur’an, or, are on the hearts locks thereof?"

(Qur’an, 47:24)

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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW & ARAB AFFAIRS
Children’s Page

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

By OLIVE TOTO

Akram was thinking deeply as he started to write this letter.

My dear Hanif,

I have sent a cutting and a letter to Mâlik. I am sure he will send the piece of news in the cutting on to you. It is about the kindness of President Násir of Egypt, to a little boy in sending him to England for an operation. In my letter I told Mâlik that one should spread Islam amongst the people in this, and other countries where one might live. By this I meant just tell people about Islam and try to brush away the cobwebs, which ignorant people weave around Islam. You and I know that Islam is a simple religion with its belief in only One God and all the prophets, with the Prophet Muhammad as the Last Prophet, with a final message for all of mankind.

Now, my dear Hanif, in my letter to Mâlik, I said that the television only dished out talks, etc., which were one-sided when talking about our religion. Well, now I shall have to take my words back when I write to Mâlik, and here is my story why.

On Sunday I was in a bad mood. I had read an article on Islam, which was full of wrong statements. Suddenly I realized that Islam was my baby, and that it was my duty to look after it, and that I should not expect strangers to care about my baby. I vowed to myself there and then, that this baby should have all my love and care to make it grow strong in this country where I live. Although I am only a boy, I can help a lot in my own way.

As I was thinking about these things, I heard my mother’s voice saying to me, “Akram, come on, You must get on with your homework. I think that it would be better if you went into the other room and did your writing”. I picked up my homework and started to move off, when the word Islam came out from the television. I quickly turned around to see the television. There I saw a group of children listening to a Muslim Arab, whose name is Mr. Karmî. He was speaking about Islam, and was saying to the children, “We are not Muhammadans; we are Muslims, we believe that Muhammad was a man and a Prophet, who brought a message that God is One, and the only One to be worshipped.” Mr. Karmî spoke about the holy places of Islam in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, and also many other things. Oh, how happy I was, I could have shouted with joy! And how interested those children looked. They asked many questions.

Just when this had finished, a friend came in. He is a Yugoslav Muslim boy who came over from his country a month ago. I told him how happy I was, and all about my thoughts of late. He turned to me and said, “My dear brother, about two weeks ago you missed something interesting. Our brother, the champion boxer, Muhammad ‘Alî, who was known before as Cassius Clay, appeared in a television interview. Straight away he let everyone know that he was a Muslim. I have never heard a boxer say, ‘I belong to so and so religion’ before. This made me a very happy boy. Muhammad ‘Alî went on to explain why he boasted so much when he first came to the ring. He said that he did that to draw the crowds, because people would get mad over his bragging and come to see him, if it were only to shout at him, as people do in wrestling matches. He had to draw in a crowd somehow, and this was showmanship. It seems that he is really a very serious young man who is a good Muslim, and does not drink alcohol, nor eat pork. In fact, he gave one the impression that he led a good Muslim life, which, I am sure, is true”.

“I felt very happy over all this,” continued the Yugoslav boy, whose name is Satric. “The person interviewing Muhammad ‘Alî said to him, ‘Do you think that you are the greatest?’ With a humble look he replied, ‘Only God is the Greatest,’ and he said in Arabic ‘Aklâhu Akbar’.

“That finished the talk” said Satric, “And I can still hear those words from the television, God is the Greatest, floating over the air, and I shall never forget it”.

Dear Hanif, Satric, as you know, comes from a country where there are very good Muslims. They all learn Arabic and the way they recite the Qur’ân, and chant the call to prayers is most melodious. This year three thousand Muslims from Yugoslavia have gone on the pilgrimage.

By now, they are all in Mecca standing around the Ka’bah side by side, men and women of all nations crying aloud to God the Greatest. Soon Mâlik will be coming back to us In-Shâ’ Allâh (God willing). He has suffered in Nigeria through the revolution. Let us hope that all will be well. You know, I am sure, that much more than half of the country of Nigeria is Muslim.

So our Muslim brothers must have suffered plenty in Nigeria. Between you and me, I must say that I got pretty mad when a Christian boy kept talking about how the Christians were suffering in Nigeria. So I turned to him and said, “Don’t you know that many Muslims in Nigeria are also suffering?” He did not reply to this at once. After thinking for a while he turned to me and said, “I did not know that.” I just shut up; for I realized it was my fault, and boys like
myself, for being lazy. I and others had not enlightened our friends, and I am not the only one who forgets his duty. I can tell you that much.

Oh, I can hear my mama calling me. So I must say 'Assalámu ‘Alaykum' to you.

Your brother in Islam,
Akram.

Akram ran downstairs to his mama.

"Please forgive me for keeping you waiting," said Akram. "Satric has consented to read a verse from the Holy Qur'án. He will read it in Arabic".

"And I," said Akram’s mother, "will translate it to you."

What a melodious voice Satric had, and in the room came a wonderful silence. Something filled the room. It was a peacefulness very difficult to explain.

The verse was finished. It was chapter 24 verse 35.

Satric sat down and Akram’s mother translated as follows.

"God is the Light
Of the Heavens and earth.
The parable of His Light
Is as if there were a Niche
And within it a Lamp;
The Lamp enclosed in Glass;
The glass as if it were
A brilliant star;
Lit from a blessed Tree.
An Olive, neither of the East.
Nor of the West,
Whose Oil is well-nigh;
Luminous,
Though fire scarce touched it;
Light upon Light;
God doth guide,
Whom He will
To His Light;
God doth set forth Parables for men: and God
Doth know all things."

Satric turned to Akram’s mother and said, "I do love this verse very much."

"Well," said she, "God is the greatest force. We cannot do without Him, and this word 'light' surely describes Him. At least that is what I feel. It is a wonderful verse for all boys and girls."

"Well," said Satric, "This verse is easy to understand. We cannot live without light. God is that Light, a Luminous Light, which shows up in the darkness as a flame in a lamp, which lights up every corner of the world. This radiance of the flame shows through the glass so crystal clear, shining like a brilliant star, reflecting the GREATNESS and ONENESS of God: the ever burning Flame and Light."

Satric turned to Akram and said, "It is your turn tomorrow to give a verse from the Holy Qur’án. Please choose a verse about the Prophet Muhammad who was chosen to bring Islam to the worlds."

"Boys, off to bed you go, or you will be late for school", called out the mother, "and don’t forget your prayers."

And so off they ran.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CLAIM THAT CYPRUS IS GREEK — Continued from page 21

Amathus, Lapithos, Idalion (now Dali) and Tamasus near Pera. Then again, many more Athenians, Macedonians, Dorians, and the rest, migrating eastwards, settled all over the Eastern Mediterranean area. In Egypt, Syria and above all, in Turkey. On the basis of the Greek claim to Cyprus, there is no reason why the Greeks should not claim Turkey.

The idea of Enosis is an emotional concept based on a similarity of language and religion, which owe their existence in Cyprus to the liberal rule of the Turks.

The Greek relationship, in the minds of the Greek speaking Cypriots is an emotional concept based on a similarity of language and religion. But in ancient times Greek was the lingua franca over most parts of the Mediterranean. Even in Rome it was considered the “done thing” to speak in Greek. However, whereas in all other parts of the Middle East it was displaced by other tongues, it lingered on in Cyprus due to its being an island. The people were insular in their outlook and, living in their separate settlements, their rulers generally took little notice of them provided they paid their taxes. Even so, if the Latin rule had continued it is more than likely that both language and religion would have disappeared. The Orthodox religion very nearly did disappear. It can be said, therefore, that it was the Turkish rule that allowed the language and religion to continue.

This was a situation that the Greeks started to take advantage of in the middle of the nineteenth century after Greece obtained her independence. The “Megalo Idea”, a Greater Greece, was rampant in Greece, and missionaries were sent over to Cyprus to attempt to stir up the people. In the beginning they mostly got a cool reception. The Church took up the crusade and worked on the superstitions of the people, but it was an uphill task. With the arrival of the British Administration in 1878 C.E., things took a more militant aspect. Greek teachers flooded in from Greece and started to work on the minds of the youth. The Greek patois spoken in the island which, incidentally, contained a considerable amount of Latin, was cleaned up, and the campaign for Enosis was launched. Even so, it was still difficult for the Church and schools to maintain the momentum. There were long periods of inactivity between the various outbursts of violence engineered by Greeks from the mainland ably assisted by the priests of the Orthodox Church.

The Greek speaking inhabitants of Cyprus had to be bulldozed into accepting the idea of union with Greece, and despite years of indoctrination from the cradle, both by the Church and the schools, even as late as the first EOKA campaign in 1955-59 C.E., EOKA had to assassinate far more of their own people than they killed British in order to wage their campaign.

Historically Cyprus has never been a Greek island, and the attempt to turn it into a Greek society, in whatever form, is a comparatively modern political adventure based on an emotional dream.
The Order of the
“Whirling Dervishes”

The Meaning Underlying the Rites of the Order

It was on the 17 December 1273 C.E., that the Mauláná Jaláluddín Rúmí died in the Turkish city of Konya, then the capital of the Saljúk Turks, and now a provincial centre in Southern Turkey.

In those days, Konya was one of the great seats of learning in the world. Scholars, scientists, astronomers and men of letters of the day, flocked there to discuss and lecture. It was also a great religious centre, and it was here that the Mauláná Jaláluddín Rúmí founded his order of Maulaví, perhaps better known in the West as the Order of the Whirling Dervishes. The Order combined religious mysticism and gentleness with ideals of equality and liberalism. But now it is perhaps best remembered for the performance of the Samá, the whirling dance of the disciples, the Dervishes, which symbolized celestial motion, as the earth not only revolves around the sun, but also rotates on its own axis.

Nowadays, for one week or so each year leading up to 17 December, the Samá is performed in Konya as part of a festival held to commemorate the Mauláná’s death. Last year, the festival was held between the 7th and 17th December.

In 1925 C.E., the Order was banned, along with other religious orders. For the most part, these religious orders had long ceased to adhere to their original religious ideals, and in many cases had become centres of corruption and ignorant superstition. For some years now, however, the ban has no longer applied in the more enlightened atmosphere of modern Turkey.

The Mauláná was born in 1207 C.E., into a Turkish family then living in Afghanistan. His father, Muhammed Bahá’uddín, a noted man of learning, was called Sultán al-Ullámá, and early in the 13th century took his family on the pilgrimage to Mecca; from there they journeyed North into Southern Turkey, and in 1228 C.E., were invited to settle in Konya by the Saljúk Sultan ‘Alá’uddín Kaykubád. The Mauláná was much influenced by the teaching of his father and also by a noted mystic of the day, Shamsuddín, another Turk from Tabrīz. On his father’s death, he founded his Order.

The Mauláná had been brought up in the súfí (mystic) tradition, that inner core of Islam which claims to interpret the secrets of the Qur’án, and he would use the atmosphere induced by the all-night whirling to expound his teachings through impromptu verse and discourse. The purpose of the dancing was simply to open the mind to the state where the nature of the world was revealed.

Konya, the eighth largest city in Turkey, is an exciting architectural, art and literary treasure-house on the Southern edge of that Central Anatolian Plain. It is in itself worthy of a visit, if only for the abundance of the well-preserved relics of the earlier Turkish civilizations. The Tomb and the Monastery of the Order of the Mauлавí house a fascinating museum where Dervish cells are utilised for the display of carpets, books, manuscripts and works of art of the Saljúk and early Ottoman periods.

When the Mauláná died in Konya on 17 December 1273 C.E., at the age of 66, his funeral was attended by vast numbers of people of all creeds and colour, who had come to mourn the great man, philosopher and mystic. He was interred in a magnificent mausoleum. The dome of his tomb is constructed of myriad coloured tiles in which green—the religious colour—is predominant. There are, in fact, over 65 sarcophagi in the mausoleum; these belong to his wife, daughter and son, and some forty other relatives and friends.

The mystic left behind a number of famous works including the Diván-i Kabír comprising 21 books of poetry, and the Mathnaví containing 25,618 couplets of mystic thought and ideas.

The meaning of the Mauлавí Dervish dance

In their ancient ceremonial dance, the Dervishes whirl slowly at first to the music of flute and drum, putting themselves into a trance-like state. The dance is based on the order

JANUARY 1970
of the universe, the basic movement being the turning round of the individual just as the earth rotates on its axis. The dancers, wearing a costume that was designed by the Maulana to symbolize the state of mourning, also circle round their leader as the earth circles round the sun. After a few initial turns with their arms crossed over their chests, the dancers raise their right arms, palms up, while their left arms are held pointing downwards with palms down. This gesture indicates that whatever they may receive from God, they want to pass on to their fellow-men.

The annual festival in Konya is held in a large auditorium in the town, and performances are given twice daily during the Maulana Festival.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the Maulana’s death, all mystics feel his ever-fresh message in their hearts where the unifying voice of reed-flutes echoes eternally.

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MYTHS ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST — Continued from page 5

for their very security and existence against principles and practices they find themselves defending in Israel.”

Or to cite another great Jewish prophet, the measure of whose greatness may be estimated by the vigour of Zionist attacks against him, Rabbi Elmer Berger.

“In Israel there are laws seeking to bind Jews of all countries into an obligatory nationalist relationship with this new state. At the same time there are laws which discriminate against more than a million and a half ‘Palestine refugees’ who are recognized by the world to have legitimate claims to citizenship rights in the territories now comprising or occupied by Israel. There are discriminatory practices against the more than half of Israel’s Jews who are Arab or Orientals. There are laws which prevent the full and equal practice of any Judaism in this ‘Jewish’ state other than the interpretation of Judaism vested in the recognized religious-political parities.”

And in the language of Henry A. Byroade of the American State Department, Israel has adopted “the attitude of conqueror, and the conviction that force and a policy of retaliatory killings, is the only policy that their neighbours will understand.”

9. The Arabs are against the Jews

The Arabs are emphatic about this. I must have heard a thousand times, “We are not against Jews. We are against Zionists.” Or they may emphasize that they knew and lived with Jews, and liked Jews in Palestine, and things were all right until the Zionists came.

The fear is that as generations, who do not know Jews personally, grow up in the camps of Jordan, the distinction will disappear. There is some anti-semitism in the Middle East. And appalling though the thought is, it is likely to increase if a solution is not found and if Israel continues to pursue her present policies, encouraged by the uncritical support of Jewish Zionists abroad.

10. The Arabs want to throw Israel into the sea

Well, this has been said often enough. And it is this awful threat and fear that disturbs Christians and Jews, and responsible Arabs.

Recently, I asked Dr. Hasan al-Zayyát, President Násir’s chief spokesman in Cairo, about this statement. He said, “To bear a child out of wedlock is a sin. To destroy the child after it is born is sinful too.” The responsible Arab powers want to settle with Israel, have secure boundaries, and end the state of belligerence. But some, such as the U.A.R., do not want to recognize her in the sense of having formal or trade relations with her. They feel that if there could be an end to belligerency and Israel would stop threatening to expand, if the refugees could be compensated or have their homes back, eventually things could work out.

While there are cease-fire lines in Israel, there has never been a cease-fire on the propaganda front. This battle Israel has always won in North America. Stone says, “The United States press is so overwhelmingly pro-Zionist.” My only addition would be, Canada is worse.

It seems to me that the press and particularly the Church press, have a responsibility to clear away some of the propaganda and get at the truth. We have misunderstood the Middle East and have, in misunderstanding, failed to act wisely as well.

Too many of us have been victimized by false propaganda, and suffered from imbalanced information. Some have made quick romantic trips to the Holy Land, often to one side only. Some churchmen and Church editors have travelled at Israeli expense. We have been victimized by faulty Biblical exposition and naïve understanding of prophecy.

For the Middle East constitutes a great threat to world peace. It is without any doubt a most strategic centre of the modern world. We could have another Vietnam, and a lot worse than Vietnam, in which North America could find herself on the wrong side in an unjust war. As many Arabs say, “Your present policies in our world are pushing us into the Communist camp where we don’t want to go.”

A. C. FORREST.

(In The Middle East Newsletter, Beirut, Lebanon, for April 1969.)

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